SPEECHES ON PARLIAMENTARY REFORM

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SPEECHES

ON

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, &c.,

BY

JOHN BRIGHT, ESQ., M.P.;

DELIVERED DURING THE AUTUMN OF 1860,
TO THE PEOPLE OF
ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, AND IRELAND, AT BIRMINGHAM, MANCHESTER, LEEDS, GLASGOW, DUBLIN, AND LONDON.

REVISED BY HIMSELF.

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THIS COLLECTION

OF

MR. BRIGHT'S SPEECHES

ON

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM,

DELIVERED BY HIM IN THE PRINCIPAL CITIES IN

THE UNITED KINGDOM, DURING THE AUTUMN OF 1866,

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO

THOMAS BAYLEY POTTER, ESQ.,

THE REPRESENTATIVE IN PARLIAMENT OF MR. BRIGHT'S NATIVE

BOROUGH OF ROCHDALE, AND A SINCERE FRIEND

OF THE PEOPLE,

BY THE EDITOR.

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SPEECH AT BIRMINGHAM.

On the occasion of the great Reform Demonstration at Birmingham, which was held on Monday, the 27th August, Mr. Bright delivered the following speech in the large room of the Town Hall, to a crowded and enthusiastic audience. After the extraordinary cheering which greeted his rising had subsided, the hon. gentleman said:—

Mr. Mayor and gentlemen,—I accept the address which has just been presented to me with feelings which I shall not attempt to express. I accept it as ample compensation for whatsoever labours I have expended in your service, and I shall take it from this meeting, and hold it as a constant stimulus to whatsoever labours may lie in my path in your service for the future. There are times when I feel no little despondency at the small result of many years of public labour; but to look upon a meeting like that assembled here, and to look upon that vast gathering which your town has exhibited to the country and to the world to-day, is enough to dispel every feeling of fear or of despondency, and to fill the heart and nerve the arm to new and greater labours for the future. During the last session of Parliament, in the debate on the second reading of the Franchise Bill, I took the opportunity of offering a word of counsel and of warning to the powerful party in the House which opposed that bill. In those words of warning and of counsel I asked them to remember that if they should succeed in defeating that bill and overthrowing the Government, there would still remain the people of England to be met, and the claims of the great question of reform to be considered and settled. We have not had to wait long before that which I foretold has come to pass. In London we have seen assemblies of the people such as for a generation past have not been witnessed. In many other parts of the country there have been meetings greater than have been seen for thirty years, and notably to-day there has been a voice given forth from the very centre and heart of England which will reach at least to the circumference of the three kingdoms. There has been an attempt to measure the numbers that are present in this hall at this moment. There are probably six thousand persons here. I ask any who were present to-day to reckon how many times this hall could have been filled from that multitudinous congregation upon which our

eyes rested, but to the full extent of which they could scarcely reach. It is highly probable that it might have been filled forty times from that vast number. Yes, and at this moment I am told that outside there is an audience far greater than that I now address; whilst to-morrow morning there will be millions of an audience throughout the whole of the United Kingdom, anxious to know what has been done and what has been said on this 27th day of August in this great town of Birmingham. We are not here to-night to discuss the question of reform, because that is a question which we have already settled. What we have to do is to discuss calmly our present position and our future work in reference to this great question. My honourable colleague has said that the bill of the late Government was one of singular moderation. It was also a bill—I speak now only of the Franchise Bill—of a singular and most honest simplicity; and that was the great reason that I felt it my duty, and that you felt it yours, to give it an honest support. I will just tell you how much and how little it proposed to give, or would have given, to the working classes of this country; and I think it necessary to state this because of the argument which I intend to raise upon it. The Government produced to the House of Commons a blue book, most elaborately compiled, and as far as I know, with the exception of one point, correct and trustworthy; but they proposed to inform the House of the number of working men who are now upon the register, and what addition would be made to that number if the bill passed. I differed entirely from their estimate, which I believe to have been to a very great extent erroneous, and I think I produced facts in the House of Commons which sustained my opinion. Mr. Gladstone told us that at present there are on the borough registers in England and Wales working men to the number of 126,000. He showed further that by the abolition of the ratepaying clauses, if there was no alteration in the £10 suffrage, there would be an addition of 60,000 electors, who, he reckoned, would all be working men; and then he said that if the franchise was reduced from £10 to £7, there would be a further addition of 144,000, all of whom he estimated as working men. Therefore he stated that when that bill passed there would be on the borough registers of England and Wales 330,000 working men, of whom 204,000 would be new voters added by that bill. I believe that estimate was made with perfect honesty by Mr. Gladstone, but that it was to a very large extent erroneous. I showed several boroughs, and I believe I might have gone through almost every borough in the United Kingdom, where the number of working men stated in the returns was at least double, and in many cases far more than double, the actual number upon the register. I estimated, also, that although the abolition of the ratepaying clauses might add 60,000 new votes, it would be very unfair to expect that more than one-third, or 20,000 of them—being ten pounders and upwards—would be of the class of working men. I said further that it was absurd to reckon that every man between £10 and £7 was of the class of working men, and I supposed that at least no more than two-thirds of them could be placed in that list. My estimate differed, therefore, from Mr. Gladstone's thus far. I said that of the 126,000 now upon the register there were not more than the half, or 63,000; instead

of there being 60,000 admitted by the abolition of the ratepaying clause, there would not be more than 20,000; and that, instead of there being 144,000 working men admitted by the reduction of the franchise from £10 to £7, it was a fair estimate to take two-thirds of that number, or 96,000. My opinion therefore, was, that when that bill passed, if it should pass, there would be upon the borough registers of England and Wales, not 330,000 of working men, but 179,000, and that the bill would not admit 204,000 but only 116,000 of that class. Take either my estimate of 116,000 or Mr. Gladstone's estimate of 204,000 as the number of working men to be added by the late bill to the register, and I will ask you what, after all, does it all come to? 204,000 working men according to the Government estimate, 116,000 according to mine, and in addition about 200,000 new voters added to the counties under a £14 franchise, who must of necessity be almost altogether outside the working classes. That was the bill which my honourable colleague has described as one of singular moderation. Out of five or six millions of men in the United Kingdom who are not now enfranchised, the whole number of the working classes to be admitted in the boroughs of England and Wales was only 200,000. Now that bill, so moderate that I confess I had entertained the hope that it would pass through Parliament without any great difficulty, was resisted as if it had been charged with all the dangerous matter which the Tory party actually attributed to it. It was intrigued against in a manner—I had almost said more base, but I will say more hateful than any measure I have seen opposed during the 23 years that I have sat in the House of Commons; and, finally, under every kind of false pretence, it was rejected by a small majority, and fell, and with it the Government which had proposed it also fell. The reason I have given you these figures is that I want to show you the desperate resolution of the present Government, and of the party which it represents, to deny to the working classes of this country any share in its government. I am not confined to the votes of the House and the destruction of the bill, but I am able, I think, to show you by the arguments upon which the Tory party proceeded that such is their determination, and it may be their unchangeable resolution. Several of the speakers to-night have referred to the slanders and calumnies heaped upon the great body of the people during the discussions of the last session; and, no doubt, although his name was not mentioned, the speakers had in their minds one member of the House who virtually has no constituency—whose sole constituent, at any rate at that time, is now no longer here to partake of the strife or the contests of politics, though I presume another constituent acts and reigns in his stead. If I quote anything that Mr. Lowe said, understand me that I wish to bring no charge against him whatsoever. He has spent some years in Australia, and probably has voyaged round the world; and I do not deny him the right to voyage round the world of politics—and to cast anchor in any port that may be pleasant to him. I merely intend to quote something that he said, because when it was said it was received with rapturous enthusiasm by the great party in the House who are the supporters of Lord Derby and of Mr. Disraeli. This is extracted from the *Times* newspaper, a paper in which, as is well known, the speaker

has been for many years an eminent writer, and over which, unless reports speak untruly, he has no small degree of control. He says: "I have had opportunities of knowing some of the constituencies of this country; and I ask if you want venality, ignorance, drunkenness, and the means of intimidating—if you want impulsive, unreflecting, violent people—where would you go to look for them? To the top or to the bottom? It is ridiculous to blink the fact that since the Reform Act the great corruption has been among the voters between £20 and £10 rental—the lodging-house and beerhouse keepers;" "but it is said, Only give the franchise to the artisan and then see the difference." He goes on—passing a sentence which was a classical illustration which amused the House, but which it is not necessary to quote here. He said: "You know what sort of persons live in these small houses"—houses, of course, between £10 and £7. "We have long had experience of them under the name of freemen, and it would be a good thing if they were disfranchised altogether. They were dying out of themselves, but the Government propose to bring them back again under another name, so that the effect of passing this bill would be, first, to increase corruption, intimidation, and all the evils that happen usually in elections; and next that the working men of England, finding themselves in a full majority of the whole constituency, will awake to a full sense of their power, and say, 'We can do better for ourselves. Don't let us any longer be cajoled at elections. Let us set up shop for ourselves. We have objects to carry as well as our neighbours, and let us unite to carry those objects. We have the machinery. We have our trades unions. We have our leaders ready. (Loud Opposition cheers, and laughter.) We have the power of combination as we have shown over and over again, and when we have a prize to fight for we will bring it to bear with tenfold more force than ever before.'" These are the sentiments which, uttered in my hearing, were received with enthusiastic approbation by the great body of the Tory party and by the supporters of the present Government. Observe what it really means. It is that voters now between £20 rental and £10 are so bad that if you go lower it will be something like ruin. That there will be more venality, ignorance, and drunkenness; and then, speaking to the House of Commons—in which the landed proprietors, or the bulk of them, have always acted as a general trades' union, where they raised the price of bread and diminished the size of the loaf as long as the people would let them—he says there will be combinations of working men for their special objects, and therefore—mind, this is his conclusion—shut them out for ever; bolt the door,—say, loudly and boldly, you, the Parliament of England, to the 5,000,000 or 6,000,000 of men who have now no vote, and whom we pretend to represent,—"No one of you who cannot pay a rental of £10 shall ever speak by his direct representative within the walls of this House." That is the policy which Mr. Lowe recommends. It is not important at all because Mr. Lowe recommends it. It is important only because it has been accepted and approved by the great Tory party in Parliament. However, I say—I who am charged with designs against the safety of the institutions of this country—I say it is a dangerous policy—a policy which in other countries where carried out has done great things. Through it crowns and coronets have sometimes been lost, and I am not

sure that it is a policy which can be safely maintained with us. I asked one of the most trusted and intelligent and excellent Frenchmen with whom I am acquainted, one of the most confidential friends of the dynasty of Louis Phillippe and of the Orleans family, what it was that drove that family from France, and I referred to stories of corruption amongst ministers and other things which had been circulated in public and in private. He said: "None of these things did it. It was the attempt of the King to govern France by a parliament that represented an insignificant minority of the people, and which parliament he thought he could perpetually manage by a judicious distribution of patronage." On the principle of governing this country by a Parliament elected by an insignificant minority of the people, Lord Derby comes into office, and judging from the speeches and the votes of the last session of Parliament, his party intends as long as possible to govern upon that principle and that policy. Working men in this hall, I wish my voice had been loud enough to have said what I am about to say to the vast multitude which we looked on this day; but I say it to them through the press, and to all the working men of this kingdom, I say that the accession to office of Lord Derby is a declaration of war against the working classes. (Cheers, and a voice from the platform, "We accept the challenge.") The course taken in London the other day by the police, and it had almost been by the military, is an illustration of the doctrines and the principles of the Derby administration. They reckon nothing of the constitution of their country—a constitution which has no more regard to the crown or to the aristocracy than it has to the people—a constitution which regards the House of Commons fairly representing all the nation, as important a part of the governmental system of this kingdom as either the House of Lords or the throne itself. If they thus despise the constitution they likewise despise the claims of five millions or six millions who are unrepresented. You may work, you may pay taxes, you may serve in the army, and fight; 70,000 or more of your brethren are now living under the burning sun of India, and twice as many more are serving in the ranks in different parts of the world; and you, the great body of the people from whom these men are drawn, are not considered worthy to do so simple an act as to give a vote in your great town for your present or any future members. You are to have no vote, no share in the Government; the country you live in is not to be your country. You are like the Coolies or the Chinese who are imported into the West Indies or California. You are to work, but you are not to take root in the country, or to consider the country as your country, and, worse than all this, in addition to this refusal of the commonest right of the constitution, you are insulted by the cheers which a great party have given to the language which I have read to you to-night. You are to be told that you are so ignorant and so venal, so drunken, so impulsive, so unreflecting, and so disorderly that it is not even safe to skim off as it were the very cream of you to the number of 116,000, or it may be of 204,000, and to admit them to a vote for members of the House of Commons. This is the Tory theory. This is the faith of Lord Derby and his party, and I maintain that I am not saying a word that is an exaggeration of the truth, for I have heard that party over and over again vociferously

cheer sentiments such as I have described. The Government which has been overturned was a very different Government. Lord Russell had no fear of freedom. He could much more easily be persuaded to give up, and he would much more willingly abandon for ever the name of Russell than he would give up, his hereditary love of freedom. The Government, which was led by Earl Russell in one House and by Mr. Gladstone in the other, was founded and acted upon the principle of trust and confidence in the people. Some said there was not much difference between the Derby Government and the Russell Government. Lord Derby asked Lord Clarendon to take office in his Government. There was something charming in the very audacity of the effrontery of Lord Derby. Lord Clarendon was an eminent minister of the Government that brought in a bill which the Tory party declared to be subversive of the constitution; and Lord Derby asks Lord Clarendon to keep the Foreign-office in the new Government! The Government of Lord Derby in the House of Commons sitting all in a row reminds me very much of a number of amusing and ingenious gentlemen whom I daresay some of you have seen and listened to. I mean the Christy Minstrels. The Christy Minstrels, if I am not misinformed, are, when they are clean washed, white men; but they come before the audience as black as the blackest negroes, and by this transformation it is expected that their jokes and songs will be more amusing. The Derby minstrels pretend to be Liberal and white; but the fact is if you come nearer and examine them closely you will find them to be just as black and curly as the Tories have ever been. I do not know, and I will not pretend to say, which of them it is that plays the banjo and which the bones. But I have no doubt that, in their manœuvres to keep in office during the coming session, we shall know something more about them than we do at present; they are, in point of fact, when they pretend to be Liberal, mere usurpers and impostors. Their party will not allow them to be liberal, and the party exists only upon the principle upon which they have acted in all their past history of resisting and rejecting every proposition of a liberal character that has been submitted to them. What is this Derby principle of shutting out more than five-sixths of all the people from the exercise of constitutional rights? If any of you take ship to Canada you will find the Derby principle utterly repudiated. But in Canada there is no uprooting of institutions, and no destruction of property, and there is no absence of order or of loyalty. If you go to Australia you will find there that the Derby principle is unknown, and yet there reigns order as in this country, contentment with the institutions of the colonies, and a regard for law and property. If you go to those greatest and most glorious colonies of this country, the United States of America, there you find a people exhibiting all the virtues which belong to the greatest nations on the face of the earth; there you find a people passing through a tremendous war and a tremendous revolution with a conduct and success, with a generosity and a magnanimity which have attracted and aroused the admiration of the world; and if you go to Europe you find in the republic of Switzerland, in the kingdoms of Holland and Belgium, in Norway and Sweden, in France, and now you are about to witness it in Germany, a wide extension of the franchise, hitherto,

in this country, in our time, unknown; and neither emperor, king, nor noble believes that his authority or his interests, or the greatness or happiness of any one of those countries will be jeopardised by the free admission of the people to constitutional rights. In Germany, the vote is to be given to every man of 25 years of age and upwards. Let them propose to do the same here, and then we shall not be in advance of the great State of North Germany which is now being established. But what is it we are coming to in this country? Why, that that which is being rapidly accepted in almost all parts of the world is being persistently and obstinately refused here in England, the home of freedom, the mother of parliaments. Yet in this England five millions of grown men, representing more than 20,000,000 of our population, are to be permanently denied that which makes the only difference between despotism and freedom all the world over. I venture to say that this cannot last very long. How do we stand at this moment? The noble and illustrious lady who sits upon the throne—she whose gentle hand wields the sceptre over that wide empire of which we are the heart and centre—she was not afraid of the Franchise Bill which the Government introduced last session. Seven times, I think, by her own lips or by her pen, she has recommended to Parliament the admission of a large number of working men to the Parliamentary franchise. If this proposition was destructive, would not the Queen discover that fact? If the bill of the last session had been a pernicious bill, would the 30,000,000 of people of the United Kingdom not have been able to produce one single public meeting in condemnation of it? The middle class in our towns are by a vast majority in favour of it. All the middle class of Birmingham have sympathised with the great proceedings of this day, and I doubt not that by-and-bye we shall see in the populous districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire assemblies rivalling those which have been held in London and Birmingham, and if we go to the House of Commons—that House elected so much by landlord compulsion in the counties, and by corruption, intimidation, and tumult in the boroughs—do not suppose that I am charging that House of Commons with faults that it does not itself understand and acknowledge:—have you read the report of the proceedings at the commission for Yarmouth? Did you read that a late member for that borough is said to have spent £70,000 to maintain his seat? Did you read that one gentleman, an inferior partner in a brewery, contributed £4,000 for the election of his partner, and that another gentleman knowing nothing of that borough goes down there and supplies £6,000 to fight a contest spread then only over a few days? and remember that when Yarmouth or any other borough is thus brought before the public it is only a sample of a very considerable sack—and that for every borough which is thus exposed there are probably 10 or 20 other boroughs which are to a very large extent in the very same condemnation. Notwithstanding this, if we go to the House of Commons, we find the Parliament of England at this moment about equally divided, and that half the House was in favour of the late bill. If that be so, what is wanted in this poising and balancing of the scale? It only wants this, that the working men of England should heartily throw their influence into that side which is for their interests, and that side will prevail. You know I have preferred

that the franchise should be established upon what I consider to be the ancient practice of the country. I am not afraid of the principles of the Reform League. I have no fear of manhood sufferage, and no man is more a friend of the ballot than I am. It is a great cause which is offered to your notice to-night. It is a grand and noble flag under which you are asked to enlist yourselves. What I would recommend you to do is this—and I imagine myself at this moment to be speaking in the ear of every intelligent, sober, and thoughtful working man in the three kingdoms—let us try to move on together ; let us not split hairs on this question ; let us do as your fathers did thirty-four years ago ; let us have associations everywhere ; let every workshop and factory be a reform association ; let there be in every one of them a correspondent, or a secretary who shall enrol members and assist this great and noble cause. I would recommend that the passages I have read from that celebrated and unhappy speech should be printed upon cards, and should be hung up in every room in every factory, workshop, and clubhouse, and in every place where working men are accustomed to assemble. Let us rouse the spirit of the people against these slanderers of a great and noble nation. There will come soon another election. The working men may not be able to vote, but they can form themselves into a powerful body, and they can throw their influence in every borough on the side of the candidates who pledge themselves to the question of reform. If they do this, you may depend upon it they will change many seats, and give a certain majority for reform in the next Parliament. It may be necessary and desirable to meet Parliament again with petitions from all parts of the country, signed by numberless names. There is no effort which the constitution, which morality permits us to use, that we should leave unused and unmade for the purpose of furthering this great cause ; and let us be sure of this, that we demand only that the question of reform shall be dealt with by a Government honestly in favour of reform. The address which has been presented to me has referred to 1832. I remember that time well. My young heart then was stirred with the trumpet blast that sounded from your midst. There was no part of this kingdom where your voice was not heard. Let it sound again. Stretch out your hands to your countrymen in every part of the three kingdoms, and ask them to join you in a great and righteous effort on behalf of that freedom which has been so long the boast of Englishmen, but which the majority of Englishmen have never yet possessed. I shall esteem it an honour which my words cannot describe, and which even in thought I cannot measure, if the population which I am permitted to represent should do its full duty in the great struggle which is before us. Remember the great object for which we strive. Care not for calumnies and lies. Our object is this—to restore the British constitution in all its fulness, with all its freedom, to the British people.

SPEECHES AT MANCHESTER.

On the 24th of September, in the Free-trade Hall, Manchester, which was crowded almost to suffocation by upwards of 5,000 persons, Mr. Bright was presented with an Address by the Reform League recently established in that city. In accepting it, Mr. Bright spoke as follows:—

I was not aware when I was invited to attend this meeting that anything different from the ordinary course of proceedings would take place. I was not informed that I should be honoured by the presentation of any address. I accept this address with many thanks for the kindness which you have shown me; at the same time I accept it with something like fear and trembling, because of the mighty responsibility which by this address you would throw upon me. I have never had any ambition for leadership; I do not feel myself to have fitness for such an office. I have worked hitherto wheresoever I chanced to be, whether in the ranks or in the front; and without pledging myself to undertake all that this address asks of me to undertake and perform, I may, however, freely pledge myself to this, that wherever I find men willing to work for human freedom and human happiness, I trust I shall be ready to take my part with them. And now, as my eye as rested upon this wonderful assembly, I have thought it not wrong to ask myself whether there is any question that is great, that is sufficient, that is noble, that has called us together to-night, and I have come to the conclusion that great as is this meeting, and transcendantly great the meeting which was held in the middle of the day, that the question which has brought us together is worthy of our assembly and worthy of every effort we can make. We are met for the purpose, so far as lies in our power, of widening the boundaries and making more stable the foundations of the freedom of the country in which we live. We are not as our fathers were 200 years ago, called upon to do battle with the Crown; we have no dynasty to complain of, no royal family to dispossess. In our day the wearer of the crown of England is in favour of freedom. For on many separate occasions, as you all know, the Queen has strongly, as strongly as became her station, urged upon Parliament the extension of the franchise of the people. Parliament has been less liberal than the Crown, and time after time these recommendations have been disregarded, and the offers of the monarch have been rejected and denied. But no more of that now; and it is not our business to-night to assail the hereditary branch of the legislature—the House of Peers. For my share, I cannot but think that if there are dangers ahead for the House of Lords they are dangers not so much from without as from within. Its foes in my view are those of its own household. It stands in the high place of a senate, but it too much abdicates the duties of a senate; it gives its votes, its power, its proxies into the hands of one

man, and he often, and as at present, is not by any means the wisest of men. Unfortunately for that House it does almost nothing; it does not even debate freely, and the session will pass and you scarcely hear any discussion in that House which is calculated to instruct the people on political subjects. I sometimes fear that it is no longer a temple of honour, the path to which leads through the temple of virtue. It has become too much the refuge for worn-out members of the House of Commons; it becomes every year more numerous, without, I fear, becoming more useful, and unless it can wake itself up to the great duties of a senate, decay and darkness will settle upon it. Some of its members may read what I say. I beg to assure them that in these few observations I am speaking in no unfriendly spirit of the House of Lords. But we have a distinct purpose to-night, and our purpose is this, to restore the representation of the people, to make the House of Commons, the House which professes to represent the common people, a reality and no longer a sham. Now, the facts of our representation are simple, the important facts can be stated in about two sentences. I think at every reform meeting they should be restated, and they should fix themselves in the mind of every reformer throughout the country. I am charged with telling things that everybody knows; well, if we tell them often enough everybody will know. This is a fact, and it is worth mentioning, that there are seven millions of grown-up men responsible to the laws in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland; that of these about one million and a quarter are on the list of voters; that exclusive of paupers and exclusive of criminals—though I am sorry to mention these two classes in the same sentence—exclusive of these, to whom no man proposes to give the franchise, there are five millions of men in the United Kingdom who have no votes. Of the million and a quarter who have votes the counties take up about 750,000, and the boroughs about 550,000. Now, I shall say that which some men will contradict, but which I venture to say is true, when I declare that for the most part the county representation in this country is not a popular representation in any honest sense of that term. We know that with a franchise of £50 occupation and the freehold franchise added to it, that the great body of the people in every county is excluded from the elective franchise. Well, I regard the county representation to a very large extent as a dead body tied to the living body of our borough representation. I believe it will become less so. In Ireland there are some free counties; in Scotland there are some, and there will be more. But still, taking the county representation as a whole, it is in a most unsatisfactory condition. Well, but, of the boroughs where there is life and where there is some freedom, what is their condition? Only one fact. There are 145 boroughs with ~~over~~ 20,000 inhabitants each, and they return 215 members; there are 109 boroughs with over 20,000 of population, and they return 181 members. But look at the difference in the number of voters, the number of the population, and the amount of taxation. It is something startling and enormous. The boroughs under 20,000 have 79,000 electors; the boroughs over 20,000 have 485,000 electors. The boroughs under 20,000 have 1,350,000 people; the boroughs over 20,000 have 9,305,000 people. The boroughs under 20,000 pay £367,000 in taxation; the boroughs over 20,000 pay £5,240,000

in taxation; and yet the boroughs under 20,000 have 215 members, as against 181 members for boroughs over 20,000. Now, I am sure you will agree with me in this, that the representation which, as regards the franchise, shuts out five millions of men, and which, as regards distribution, leaves the state of things which I have now described, can only be fairly pictured when I call it a stupendous fraud upon the people. The counties—I have Lord Derby's own authority for it—the counties are politically the hunting ground of the great landowners. Lord Derby said, "if you will tell me the politics of a few of the chief landowners in the county I will tell you the politics of the county members." The boroughs, what are they? Manchester knows no bribery, nor does Birmingham; but of the boroughs of 20,000 population and under, how many of them are full of corruption? There are small boroughs, such as Banbury, Tavistock, and Liskeard, where, I believe, great honour and purity prevail; but the bulk of these boroughs are accessible to the influence of any man who will come there with plenty of money in his pocket, and no principles or morals in his heart. In point of fact, without any exaggeraion, we may say that all the evils which are possible to influence an electoral system are amply provided for by the electoral laws of England. Compulsion, bribery, drunkenness, lavish and disgraceful expenditure, all these not only exist but are absolutely inevitable under the state of the law which now prevails; and I venture to say—and I never said anything in my life which I would more easily undertake to prove—that there is no remedy for this state of things where ambitious and unprincipled and rich men come into contact with small numbers of voters; there is no remedy whatsoever but in large constituencies and the security of the ballot. Now if I have fairly described the state of things, can we wonder at the difficulty which meets us when we have any question before Parliament? Look back at the question of the corn laws, look back on the question of the paper duty, look back or look now on the question of our disgraceful expenditure, and you will find that on every occasion when the people ask for any reform of any kind, they have to make a desperate fight for it, just as though they were wresting it not from their countrymen and brothers, but from the representatives of a conquering nation. Take this last session of all—this session which has just passed over, a session ever to be remembered. The Government, headed by Lord Russell in the House of Lords, by Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons—anxious to make one step forward in the direction of popular rights, brought in a bill most honest in its character, and most moderate in its dimensions. It was a bill so moderate in its dimensions, that some of us who think much more would be greater wisdom to grant, found ourselves in some difficulty in tendering to the Government our cordial support to enable them to carry that bill. Well, that bill, which I hold every man who is in favour of any reform at all had no kind of excuse for opposing—that bill was met by an opposition, I will say at once as malignant and as dishonest as I have ever seen given to any measure in the House of Commons. There was no artifice, there was no trick that was too mean and too base to be made use of to retard the progress of and ultimately destroy the bill, and to such an extent did it go that even Lord Stanley was induced, I know not how, I

know not by what evil spirit of his party—he was indeed to make a proposition which to my certain knowledge some among his own party described as utterly disgraceful. The facts and the arguments on which that bill was supported and defended were not met, and never could be met. Another policy was adopted, and to get rid of the inconvenient argument of figures, they turned round and did not hesitate to slander a whole nation. The name of a gentleman eminent in these matters has already been mentioned. If I mention his name, or if I quote what he said, understand that I make no charge against him that he holds opinions which I so much deplore. Any man may hold what opinions he likes, and the opinions of any particular man in Parliament are not of very great importance. But these opinions were important because they were addressed to 300 members of the party which is now in power, and by that party they were received with uproarious and universal enthusiasm. I do not think that any meeting of the working classes held during this recess should pass without some reference to the observations of that gentleman. Bear in mind that not only were they received with enthusiastic cheering by the Tory party, but when the Queen sent for Lord Derby and committed to him the charge of forming a new Government, he either directly, or through his patron, the owner of the borough of Calne, endeavoured, as is universally believed, and as I believe, to prevail upon the man who had uttered these sentiments to become a member of his Government. These are some of his sentiments:—"I have had opportunities of knowing some of the constituencies in this country, and, I ask if you want venality, ignorance, drunkenness, and the means of intimidation; if you want impulsive, unreflecting, violent people, where would you go to look for them—to the top or the bottom? It is ridiculous to blink the fact that since the Reform Act the great corruption has been among the voters between the £20 and £10 rental—the £10 lodging-house and beerhouse keepers. But it is said, 'Only give the franchise to the artisan, and then see the difference.'" He goes on immediately after, omitting a sentence which is nothing to the argument. "We know what sort of people live in these small houses. We have long had experience of them under the name of 'freemen,' and it would be a good thing if they were disfranchised altogether. They were dying out of themselves, but the Government proposed to bring them back again under another name." That refers of course to persons who live in houses between £7 and £10 rental. Then he said if this bill should pass what dreadful things would happen. "The first stage would be in increase of corruption, intimidation, and disorder, of all the evils that happen usually in elections. What would be the second? The second will be, that the working men of England, finding themselves in a full majority of the whole constituency, will awake to a full sense of their power. They will say, we can do better for ourselves; we have objects to carry as well as our neighbours, and let us unite to carry those objects; we have machinery, we have our trades' unions, we have our leaders all ready. We have the power of combination, as we have shown over and over again; and when we have a prize to fight for we will bring to bear with tenfold more force than ever before." Perhaps the hint that you have your trades' unions, and machinery, and leaders—a hint which

I offered to you some years ago—may have some effect, coming from such lips. But you see the whole tenor of these observations is this. There are men to whom I should attribute no blame for uttering them, or for holding them, for there are men so timid as to see giants and ghosts everywhere. The whole tenor of these observations is to show that the great body of the working classes—because, mind, this bill only as explained by Mr. Gladstone, and in my opinion it was an exaggerated estimate, proposed to admit 200,000 of them—these observations are based on the opinion that the whole of the great body of the working classes are in that condition of ignorance and degradation and also of hostility to the existing institutions of the country, that it would not be safe to admit to the franchise even two hundred thousand out of the five millions who are now excluded. Now, I said at Birmingham, and I say here, that in every workshop, in every room, and in every factory, in every clubhouse of every trade, there ought to be a card hung up with these remarks, these slanders of the working men, there suspended. If these statements be true, hang the card up there that you may see in that mirror what you are, and reform yourselves. If this charge be false, as I hold it to be false, then read what it is that is said of you by those who are hostile to your political rights, and draw your ranks closer together and make a more resolute and determined effort to change the state of things in this country. Some newspapers have said, since my speech at Birmingham was delivered, that it was unfair to try to place this on the back of the Tory party. Why did they cheer it? Why have their newspapers said that here is a great man, dropped down as it were from the clouds, to tell us all about the constitution of this country? Why is it that Lord Derby spent many efforts trying to pursuade the utterer of these sentiments to become a member, and a powerful member of his Cabinet? I say the doctrines which Mr. Lowe uttered in that speech, I say they are in the main the doctrines upon which the Tory party has acted for generations back, although there are not many men in the House probably of that party who would dare to say what he said, and I suspect there is hardly one of them who could say it so well. I want to ask you a question. I do not know how many thousand persons there are here, but if I were to say 6,000 or 7,000—and I do not know how many thousands have been joining your demonstration to-day in Manchester; but I will put the question to them through the gentlemen below (the reporters), to whom we give so much trouble, and to whom we are so much indebted. I put this question. If these arguments of ignorance and drunkenness be true, what does it show? There is a paper published in London—the *Morning Herald*—which the other day I am told wrote some hints for me for my speech on this occasion. The *Morning Herald*, which is an organ of the Tory party, pointed out a fact, which I stated with great amplitude at a meeting of Rochdale Sunday School teachers—I think on Good Friday last—that a very large portion of the children of the working classes in Manchester—a proportion deplorably large—was growing up without any actual provision being made for their education. And the *Morning Herald* states also that in Manchester there is a great deal of drunkenness, although I believe all the figures show that there is less drunkenness in Manchester, probably, than in any other town

of equal magnitude in the kingdom. I will assume the ignorance for the moment, and assume the drunkenness, and assume the degradation to be there, and what shall I say of the Government that has permitted it? What is this Government—what is this supreme power in this country? It holds all the land, or nearly so; it holds the revenues of the richest church the world has ever seen. It has both Houses of Parliament to do its bidding. It has two national and noble universities; in fact, it has everything of power in this country, and yet according to the showing of this writer the people are ignorant and drunken and degraded. It must be far worse than that of almost any other country, because in almost every other constitutional country the franchise is far more widely extended than it is in this, and without the slightest danger to property or to order. Why is it, I ask you, that Englishmen in England are not so well educated as Englishmen in New England? In the New England States of North America there have been seven generations of men who came originally from this country, who have been thoroughly and fully instructed. I know that in every Free State—I mean in every State that was free before the late war—there is a wide suffrage; there schools are universal, and all the people have the fullest opportunity of being thoroughly instructed for the purposes of life. In this country, what are we doing? The people who have this matter in their hands, and who could settle it, are discussing questions of catechisms—Thirty-nine Articles—what they call "conscience-clauses." They are all engaged in worrying some dry bone of this kind, whilst the great body of the people, and especially the poorest of the people, are left wholly unprovided for. I venture to say—and I would stake everything I have in the world upon it—that if the platform of the National Reform League, or any platform which gave a substantial and real representation to the whole people, was embodied in an act of Parliament there would not pass over three sessions of Parliament before there would be a full provision for the thorough instruction of every working man's child in this kingdom. But there is another argument that was very often used in the House of Commons; which is even more extraordinary, coming from the quarter whence we heard it; and it was this—that the country is so prosperous, proving that it is so well governed that in reality there is not only no occasion for anything more, but nobody has any right to ask for anything more. It was one of the arguments, I believe, of the gentleman from whom I have quoted, that we have a right to be well governed, but that the right to govern is a right which exists and rests much higher up. We are assembled here in a building which recalls a good many memories if one had the time and I had the voice to dwell upon them. But, may I ask you why it is we are prosperous? You recollect, many of you here, twenty-five years ago—in the year 1841—this county was like a county subjected to desolation and to famine; and, in fact, it is only since 1846, since the abolition of the corn laws, since the general change to the free trade policy, that there has been continually growing that prosperity which is now brought against us as an argument why there should be no further reform in Parliament. Suppose we had the corn laws now, with the August we have had and the September we are having, gold would be going out of the country, the rate of interest

would be rising, the wages of the people would be falling, the wages they received would be absorbed in the purchase of dear food; and generally over the whole country there would come a state of things which would give the greatest alarm to the thoughtful in the higher class, and the greatest suffering to the multitudes at the base of the social scale. But why is it—how comes it that we are not in that danger?—that we are not filled with confusion and dismay? Who was it that destroyed the curse of the corn laws, and who was it that fought desperately to maintain that curse? Surely you know who were accustomed to assemble in the Free-trade Hall, who were largely instrumental in destroying it, and you know that no man was more forward in its support than the man who is now the Prime Minister of England. If this is so—if we, the party which we represent on this platform to-night—if we did much to promote this prosperity, are we not fairly entitled to offer ourselves as advisers on the question of the franchise? What is called statesmanship is not like any other profession. In other professions failure is acknowledged, and it shuts a man out from distinction and supremacy; but Lord Derby at this moment is Prime Minister of England whose failures are in the annals of England for thirty years past. In 1834 Lord Derby left Earl Grey's Government because he would not permit even inquiry into the excessive revenues of the Irish Church. But the Irish Church is doomed to destruction. In 1846 he left Sir Robert Peel and became the leader of the Tory Protectionists, because he would not consent to the abolition of the corn laws; and since then he has been foremost in opposition to all good things in Parliament. Lord Derby is not the leader of his party in a high sense. He is not its educator; he is not its guide. He is its leader in the foolish contests in which its ignorance and selfishness involves itself with the people. Only three or four days ago I opened a book which professed to be a history of the governing families of England. It is composed of articles, many of which appeared in the *Spectator* newspaper. There is one on the Stanleys of Knowsley, and they are certainly a governing family, seeing that Lord Derby and Lord Stanley are both of them in the present Government. In opening the book, I find that in the course taken during the agitation of the Reform Act, Lord Stanley, the present Earl of Derby, is stated to have leaped on the table where there was a number of reformers assembled, and to have urged upon them the necessity of refusing the payment of taxes till the Reform Bill was passed. I was not there to see it, but I have heard the story before several times; I see it recorded in this volume, and I take it therefore to be correct. But Lord Derby in 1852 came forward "to stem the tide of democracy." In 1859 Lord Derby was the author, or head of a Government that proposed a reform bill of a most fraudulent character; and in 1866 he is the head of a party which has destroyed an honest franchise bill, and has overthrown an honest and patriotic Government. But the newspapers which write in his support tell us that after all this his Government is not in the least disabled or precluded from dealing with the reform question. I hope no reformer will dream of such a thing. If you like you may trust your life to your most bitter foe; but I will not do it if I know it. We had free trade from free traders; for when Sir Robert Peel repealed

the Corn-law he was as sincere a free trader as if he had spoken free trade for the last five years from this platform on which I stand. But Lord Derby is not a reformer, nor will he introduce a Reform Bill in the character of a reformer. If he introduces one, it will be as before—it will be some juggle, some dishonest trick, something base, like the means by which they overthrew the bill of Earl Russell. If that bill had passed, moderate as it was, I undertake to say it would have been received in every part of the United Kingdom with the liveliest satisfaction. It would have given to working men, or to a number of them, a partnership in the State, and I believe that the nation would have been happier and stronger by the passing of that bill. But now discontent is growing—growing everywhere, and it will continue to grow until the discontent becomes a great peril in the country, unless a satisfactory measure is introduced and passed through Parliament. I charge Lord Derby and his friends with this. I say that they have brought class into conflict with class. I say that they have done much to separate Parliament from the nation—that they have made the House of Commons the reviler and not the protector of the people—and further, that they have frustrated the just and beneficent intentions of the Crown. And, in conclusion, I venture upon something—which some may deem a foretelling of what is to come. I say that these men who are now in office cannot govern Britain. The middle class and the working class will alike condemn them. They cannot govern Ireland. In that unhappy country their policy has begotten a condition of chronic insurrection which they can never cure. They will be excluded from power, and their policy will be rejected by the people; for it is on broad, and just, and liberal principles alone that England can maintain her honourable but not now unchallenged place amongst the great nations of the world.

On the evening of the following day, at a Banquet held at the Albion Hotel, in the same city, Mr. Bright, in responding to the toast, "The health of John Bright," said:—

I am very much obliged to you for the opinion you have expressed of me in such emphatic language; at the same time I am pained to think how much you attribute to me, and how much apparently you expect from me, for I am one of those who think that after all one man can do very little, and in a question like this we have now before, us unassisted, unbacked by the multitudes to whom Mr. Edge has referred, it is almost nothing we can do. However, I hope that amongst us we have been doing a little during the last two days. We know at the concluding meeting of this short Manchester campaign that these meetings have been very different, and each has been remarkable in its way. The first was

enormous beyond counting, and held amid most unfavourable circumstances. Some men coming from Rochdale in a train yesterday morning, in the same carriage with a relative of mine, said they were rather glad than otherwise that it did rain, for if it had not rained people would have said that they came out to enjoy the sunshine; but they would show them that they cared enough for the question of reform to come during a continuous shower of rain. Well, I thought that was rather a plucky idea that my townsman had laid hold of, and I suspect that it was an idea entertained by many present besides himself. The second meeting was also remarkable for its numbers. It was held in the finest hall in this kingdom, and I must say it was, as far as temperature was concerned, the most oppressive meeting which it has been my fortune to attend, for the fact is when we went into the room the temperature, the state of the atmosphere was just such as we expected it would be when we should leave the room; for the hall had been crammed full for two hours before we entered it; and, therefore, we went into a room where the atmosphere was already much exhausted, and we suffered, many of us, in consequence. To-night we have a very different meeting. It is not numerous beyond counting; but it is very agreeable, and the table has been loaded with everything that is wholesome and everything that is elegant for our gratification; and, after the three meetings, may we not say that, differing as they have differed, still they all had one object, and have been directed to one great purpose. There are different platforms or opinions here, and there is very great difference in the religious world, but still the religious world proposes to itself to march on to one common end. There are differences in this school of politics—the reform school—but we may still march on to one common end, which is a real representation of the people and the establishment of popular power as supreme in this country. Now, the Reform League, under whose auspices this movement here was originated—it has been carried on jointly by that body and by the National Reform Union, and the difference between them is not considerable—the Reform League hoists a flag which bears upon it these words, "Manhood suffrage and the ballot." Now, whatever opinion any person may have with regard to the wisdom of immediately, if it was in our power, establishing these principles, or that policy, in an act of Parliament, this, I think no man can doubt, that argument on principle, almost—if not altogether—unassailable, can be brought in favour of that flag. I speak now on the question of giving a vote to every man. I believe that there is no argument worth listening to for a moment that can be brought against the adoption of the ballot. Although we may differ, I believe the difference arises from this, that many believe that something less than the proposition of the League is sufficient for the purpose of a reform that would make the House of Commons a true representation of the people; and that proposing something short of that which the League proposes, it is believed that the large portion of that middle class, to which Mr. Rumney referred, would in some degree be propitiated, and would be induced to lend their support to the less extensive proposition. I think that is quite true. I believe that the middle classes of this country, speaking of them in any way that you like, by any

kind of measurement for the ascertainment of their opinions, my own honest opinion is that they would consider at this moment that a bill that advanced as far as household suffrage was in itself, considering the opinions of the country, a wiser measure for all purposes than that of manhood suffrage, and they believe it would give to the country a really honest Parliament. A great deal may be said for that. I think myself that opinion is on the whole correct. I do not agree at all with Mr. Rumney in the dreary picture which he gave of the opinion of the middle classes. Why, what is the result of the present system? I showed last night how entirely—almost entirely—the people took no part in county elections; that in boroughs the majority of members come from boroughs under 20,000 inhabitants; and yet notwithstanding that, you can elect a Parliament from which the people are so much excluded, and in which the aristocracy and great landowners have enormous power, you can still elect a Parliament which is within a hair's breadth of passing a measure which is, after all, a considerable extension of the suffrage; and I believe the same Parliament, if such a measure had been proposed by the Government, would have been almost as near passing a proposition for household suffrage. Therefore, I do not agree with Mr. Rumney. I think his description of the opinions of the middle classes is not accurate. If he will go into any borough in the kingdom, any free borough of any fair size, from which you may draw a fair argument, he will find that no Liberal member can be returned unless he pledges himself to a very considerable extension of the franchise; and that cannot be so, if all the middle class—I speak not of the Tories—if a great majority of the middle class in each borough were not in favour of an extension of the franchise. Well, now, my view of the whole question, and of the difference among reformers, is this: that when one sees a movement—a real movement, something grand in its proportions, powerful for the gaining of results—the plan of a sensible man who wants to do something, and does not want to split hairs, is to go with that movement and to make the best of it, and to get all that can be got out of it. Why should we who are called the middle classes see this vast volume of millions of voices gathering and rolling on? and shall we take no part in it, nor bid it welcome, nor bid it success, nor wish to see the great results which in all probability will be born of it? I was very sorry to find from the papers the other day that some friends of mine—I refer merely to one whose letter I read, in the West Riding of Yorkshire—took different views of this matter. I read a very kind and I am sure, a conscientiously-dictated letter from Mr. Baines, the member for Leeds, to the committee who are organising the great meeting that is to take place in the West Riding, declining the invitation to attend the meeting, on the ground that he was not in favour of manhood suffrage. Well, I don't blame him in the least for not being in favour of manhood suffrage. I am not in favour of manhood suffrage, as against household suffrage; and the people of Leeds or the West Riding don't want to commit Mr. Baines to manhood suffrage by his attending the meeting. I am not committed to it any the more because I have attended these meetings. No doubt it has arisen from Mr. Baines being anxious not to be misrepresented, and being so scrupulous that he should not appear to hold

out expectations to the persons attending that meeting which he was not prepared afterwards to fulfil. But so far as I have seen of the working men in connection with this movement during the last few months, I find them tolerant in a high degree, and considerate and respectful of and to all those who may honestly differ with them in any degree, and are still honestly friendly to the admission of any considerable number of them to the franchise. Well, they would admit all to work, and we should all work on with perfect unanimity up to the point where the work parts from us and falls into other hands. Make this movement as large as you like; carry it on from the West Riding to the Northumberland and the Durham districts; from there to Glasgow; and when it has exhibited itself in Glasgow, perhaps about the beginning of the year, it may reappear in greater proportions than ever in London. Let it take any proportions you please. Finally it will become a question for the deliberations of twelve or fifteen men who will be the Queen's immediate advisers, what shall be the precise measures to be presented to Parliament, and when they discuss this measure they must try to be unanimous, which is not always easy. They must try to ascertain what it is that Parliament will fairly consider and will be likely to pass. More than that. They will have to consider, not merely the voice of those who have attended these great meetings, but that portion of the people who have been silent on this question. They will have to consider that which is called the Conservative opinion of the country—the "timid opinion." They will have to consider this,—I am not speaking of those who are passionately against all reform, and who hate the very name of popular power, but I speak of the section much larger, that which lies between us and them, who are quiet stay-at-home people, who probably read their paper and have as good a feeling towards working men as any of us have, but who have not sufficiently considered this question, and who are not courageous enough in spirit to join in a great movement like this. But when the Ministry and the Cabinet come to discuss the measure to be submitted to Parliament, they must seriously take into consideration all this amount of opinion—violent some of it; less outspoken, some of it; the quiet opinion of those timid multitudes who are at home—and out of all this they must determine what is the measure which, in the then condition of public opinion, it is wise to submit to Parliament, because a measure based upon such a view can alone have a chance of passing, and when it is passed can alone be for any considerable period a satisfactory settlement of a great question like this. I say with great deference to my friend Mr. Baines, for whom I have a most unfeigned respect, and whose service in connection with this question can hardly be estimated, I am very sorry that he and others have not found it consistent with their duty to attend these meetings, and to give to them all the support in their power to make of the whole reform feeling and opinion of the country one grand force, because, depend upon it, the resistance is not easily to be surmounted, and we shall not in all probability cut off the enemy in detachments. They appear always in a powerful and united body, and unless we meet him in the same form and shape, I know not how it is possible that we can eventually triumph. I confess I am here with views which I have expressed for many years on the

question of parliamentary reform. I should not split hairs with any measure which may be introduced into Parliament. I am not likely to complain that it goes too far. I should support it if it were an honest and true measure, although I might wish it went further, and when I see a Reform League or a National Reform Union, or any other association of the people, formed for the purpose of advancing this great question, I don't stop to inquire whether they may go a few leagues short of my own terminus, or a few leagues beyond it. But as far as we can go together I go with them; my views shall be added to theirs, and I trust after a time that the whole voice of the reform party in the country may be so loud that these 300 gentlemen of whom I have a very distinct and not always very pleasant recollection, that they may at last admit that the people of this country are in favour of reform; and that when I have spoken in favour of it in the House of Commons, I have been justified in saying that I expressed the opinions of millions outside that House. I believe the time is coming when this question must be laid hold of by the Government, and that Parliament will feel it dare not treat it in the future as it has treated it in the past. These great meetings, and I think Mr. Mill very wisely and justly said so, are not meetings for discussion so much as they are meetings for demonstration of opinion, and if you like, I will add, for an exhibition of force—an exhibition of force of opinion now, and if that force of opinion be despised and disregarded, it may become an exhibition of another kind of force. Now, I have been insulted in past time, not a little in this very city, because I was said to be in favour of peace at any price. I always said I was not in favour of war at any cost, as I think ten years ago my opponents were. I believe that however much any of us may have thought that political questions in our country should never again be settled by force, yet there is something in the constitution of our nature that when evils are allowed to run on beyond a certain period unredressed, the most peace-loving of men are unable to keep the peace. And bear this in mind, however much we may wish political questions to be settled by moral means, yet it is not more immoral for the people to use force in the last resort, for the obtaining and securing of freedom, than it is for the Government to use force to suppress and deny that freedom. I must ask pardon of my friends for touching on what may be termed "abstract principles." We are doubtless a very long way—longer than can be measured, I believe and hope, from the time when it will be necessary for us seriously, or for the people of this country, to consider questions of that nature. I think that question was settled in 1832, whether the changes which may be necessary in the government of the United Kingdom can be accomplished by peaceful means, or whether force will be necessary for their completion. At that time force was very nearly necessary, and the opponents of the people saw that and succumbed. Liberty from that time has grown so much that vast meetings, 200,000 in number, are gathered together under the countenance of the mayor of a great borough, and the vast multitude was marshalled at the place of meeting under the care of the superintendent of police. I have no doubt that the Mayor of Manchester, although he did not preside at the Knot Mill meeting, still sympathised with its object. We have passed the time, and may it never return, when the people of England need to speak

of force in connection with political reform. We have greater means of instruction than we had before. Every man has his newspaper, with the history of the proceedings of the world, on his table every day, and we have freedom to assemble and discuss these questions at our will. The point at which we have arrived of political liberty and instruction and of civilisation, permits us to believe that there is nothing we can fairly claim—nothing that could do us good that cannot be obtained by that grand and peaceful movement of which the meetings of the last few days have formed so eminent and useful a part. I am glad to see Mr. Beales here to-day—and the other gentlemen connected with the Reform League. I hope that wheresoever they happen to go they will be received with the cordiality and unanimity they have met in Manchester; and I hope that when they have gone their round they will have shown to the powers that be—to the Government that is, and to the Government that shortly, I hope, is to be—that the question of reform has taken deep root in the minds of the whole nation; and that Parliament may as well shut its doors against every other kind of legislation whatsoever until it consents to pass a bill that shall satisfy the just and anxious expectations of the people.

SPEECH AT LEEDS.

THE 8th of October being the day fixed upon for the West Riding of Yorkshire Reform Demonstration, Mr. Bright in the evening, by invitation, delivered the following speech in the Leeds Town Hall. On rising he was received with great enthusiasm, the meeting rose *en masse*, and cheered vigorously for nearly five minutes. When silence was at length restored, the hon. gentleman said:—

Mr. Chairmam and gentlemen,—If I accept the address which has just been passed by this meeting, and handed to be by your chairman, be assured that I do it full of feeling—feeling in the first place of thankfulness to you for your kindness, and, in the second place, in fear lest in accepting it I should promise to do that which I am wholly unable to perform. Perhaps some of you in your vast meeting to-day have not sufficiently measured the forces which are opposed to you in the carrying of any great measure of reform. I must ask you not to imagine for a moment that it ca be effected, as it were, by one stroke of some victorious arm, but that it must be done, and can only be done, by the combined and resolute efforts of

millions of people. Mr. Kell, in the observations he has addressed to you, referred to the opinions of a dear and lamented friend of mine. I recollect one thing which he said, and which he said often during the course of our great agitation. It was this,—That the West Riding of Yorkshire freely pronouncing its opinion influenced to a large extent the opinion of England, and on some great occasions had finally determined the policy of the Government. To-day, the West Riding, in a multitudinous meeting, has spoken with a voice loud enough to be heard all through the nation, and if I am not misinformed that vast meeting of which you have formed a part decided by unanimous consent that the representation of the people in the English House of Commons was bad and unsatisfactory to the last degree. You decided that it was bad not only for what it excluded, but also for what it included; that, whilst it excluded the great bulk of the nation, it included every form of corruption and evil of which a representative system is capable; and you came to resolutions which mean this, that you will change this system if it lies in your power, and that you and the unenfranchised millions will stand that exclusion no longer. I suppose that, after this meeting and the great events of this day, we shall have no end of criticism upon our conduct and our speeches. I find that some writers, criticising the observations I made a fortnight ago in Manchester, complain that I said very much the same thing that I had said at Birmingham. I believe that a charge of this nature was brought, more than two thousand years ago, against one of the wisest of the ancients. They said that he was always saying the same thing about the same thing—and he asked them in return whether they expected him to say a different thing about the same thing. I have another answer to make to these critics, and it is this: When they have answered what I have already said about this thing, then I will try to tell them something new. Now, that case which we submit to the thinking portion of our countrymen, is a very simple one. We say that we are the citizens of a country that has had representative institutions for many centuries. There is no time to which history goes back when there was not a representative assembly of some kind within the kingdom of England. We say further, that the House of Commons is the only real basis, and the only true security for liberty to the people of these realms. We know—everybody knows—that the Crown in our day cannot give freedom to the people, neither can it materially impair our freedom. We know further that the House of Lords, from its very constitution, from the nature of its being, cannot be relied upon as a safeguard for the freedom of Englishmen. We know that representation, and a just and a fair representation, is that which alone makes a free country. Some of our colonies, now the United States of America, a hundred years ago knew that they could not be represented in the English Parliament. They would not stand taxation from a Parliament in which they were not represented. They threw off, therefore, the supremacy of the English Crown, and declared themselves a free and independent state, and at this moment there is not an English colony, from Canada to New Zealand, that would not also throw off the supremacy of England if the Parliament or Crown of

England denied to it or its representatives a responsible government. In fact there is nothing whatever that distinguishes us from any despotic country in the world, in the matter of political freedom, except the possession of a representative assembly. We have been taught—the people of this country have been taught—in my opinion foolishly and even wickedly, to hate and despise Russia, Austria, and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, or Naples as it lately existed, and mainly because those countries were despotic countries in which the people had no influence in their government. Well, then, we come to this conclusion, that the Parliament of England, and mainly the House of Commons, is the foundation of law and order, and that, unless the people are heard in that House, the people are not the source of power, and they themselves are but little removed from a despotism, not of the Crown, but of a privileged and limited class. I believe that the House of Commons has no pretence whatever for its existence except that it speaks for the nation, of which it is a part. It is not established to speak for the Crown and the dynasty; it was not established, and ought not to exist, to speak merely for nobles and great landowners. It has not the pretence to be a popular assembly if it speaks merely for the boroughmongers, and I say that its character is degraded when on its benches can be seen by scores Mr. Money Bags, M.P., who has walked through corruption into his seat for Lancaster, for Totnes, for Yarmouth, or for a score, or it may be for two or three scores of other boroughs which are very much in the same predicament. Whilst speaking for these,—for the Crown, for the nobles, for the great landowners, for the boroughmongers, for the men who have purchased their seats in Parliament, the House of Commons is no security for the freedom of the people, and if it speaks for only one out of six or seven of the people, it is no fair representation of the nation. If it exists at all, if it is to be in accordance with the principles of the English constitution, it ought so far to represent all classes of the people that every man, whether he has a vote or not himself, can feel that he has an interest in the House, and that it watches fairly over his rights and his interests. Let us take a case, and if we had a meeting every week during the year, we should have in some way or other fresh cases to dissect. There has been during last week an election in a small town in Wales, the town of Brecon. What happened? There were two candidates. The carcase was a very small one, but there were candidates ready. One was a gentleman of whom I can say nothing but what is in his praise, for I happen to know that he resigned or quitted the representation of the Duke of Marlborough's rotten borough of Woodstock because he would not subject his own honest liberal convictions to the views of his Tory brother, the Duke of Marlborough. Well, Lord Alfred Churchill was one candidate. I forget the name of the other. (A Voice: "Howel Gwyn.") That sounds very Welsh, and is probably correct. There was a furious contest, and great excitement. Public meetings were held and speeches made, and a canvass of the most pertinacious character. I am told that the agents of great and powerful houses were begging, and coaxing, and compelling, that they might get votes, and the end was the Tory candidate polled 128, and the Liberal candidate 102 votes. So that it took just 230 votes to return this last made member to the House of Commons. Be-

fore the Reform Bill the borough of Brecon was a borough returning, I believe, two members to Parliament, and the electors consisted of ten burgesses. I believe they did not make an even dozen, although they might be 11, and the Reform Bill extended the franchise in Brecon, and added something more than 200 electors, so that 230 have just voted. I ask you whether it is possible there should be any fair representation in a borough like this. I am told, from private sources, and I see it stated in the newspapers, that at least two noble families have been very active through their agents—noble families that I am told came in with the Conqueror, and as far as I know it may be the only thing they ever did. They are noble; but, judging at least from any observation that I have been able to make, they are obscure and unknown to an eminent degree. But how can there possibly be any freedom of election in a borough which can only raise 230 voters? But this is not the only borough of that kind. Let us give, if only for a moment, our attention to one or two facts. In England and Ireland there are 16 boroughs, and the population of each of them is under 5,000, but they return 22 members to Parliament. In England, Wales, and Ireland, there are no less than 72 boroughs, whose population varies from 5,000, but is under 10,000 persons, and they return 127 members to the House of Commons. You do not know much about little boroughs; but there are small boroughs in Yorkshire, as well as in Wales and the south, in which a little compulsion or corruption, or a very acute attorney, or that sort of combination which prevails amongst a few publicans, which may be accounted for if it cannot be justified by the exceptional position in which they are placed, and that exceptional legislation to which they are subjected—in these small boroughs any of these things can make the difference whether one man or the other is returned to Parliament. In point of fact, there is no representation in these small boroughs. In them the wishes of the people are nothing; the opinion of the nation nothing; the representation is in the hands of 200 or 300 electors, manipulated, coaxed, compelled, corrupted, and bribed. Take two cases which have been prominent during the past session, and allow me to touch for a moment on the character of those unjust aspersions which have been thrown out on your character by a gentleman of great ability, capable of doing very great things, but somehow or other, I know not by what means, he is always prevented from doing them. He sits nominally for Calne in the House of Commons. In that borough there are 173 electors, but the Marquis of Lansdowne is the all-prevailing influence in it, and there is no practical or real representation left to the 173 nominal electors. Well, but this gentleman comes to the House of Commons, and you know what he said. I received to-day a letter from the town of Warwick, and I am glad to see it has become a little more lively than it was when I knew it on questions of politics. I have received from Warwick a paper in which the calumnies—and I believe them to be such—uttered against the great body of the working classes are printed on placards and circulated amongst the workshops and cottages of the working classes in that borough. I wish they were circulated in every workshop in the kingdom. I say that, unless you turn your faces against the men who thus treated you, who would injure you and then insult you, I do not know to what lengths this language and

conduct may not go in the coming session of Parliament. This gentleman, who has no constituency—for the man by whose favour he was returned to the House of Commons has now gone down in the tomb—this gentleman, returned to Parliament in defiance of the British constitution, in defiance of the orders of the House of Commons, which has declared that any attempt on the part of any peer to interfere with elections is a breach of privilege—this gentleman used this language in speaking of the men to whom the bill brought in by Earl Russell and Mr. Gladstone proposed to give the franchise. He asked us whether, if we wanted venality, ignorance, drunkenness, and the means of intimidation, if we wanted impulsive, unreflecting, violent people, we should go to the top or the bottom. He said he knew what sort of persons lived in these small houses, between seven and ten pounds rental. We have had a long experience of them under the name of freemen, and it would be a good thing if they were disfranchised altogether. He also said that one of the results of passing this bill, which he did something to prevent, would be an increase of corruption, intimidation, disorder, and all those evils which usually happen at elections. And then he describes the second result—that the working men of England, finding themselves in a full majority of the whole constituency, would awake to a sense of their power, and would do the most dreadful things, which he describes. He says they would be no longer cajoled at elections. They would set up for themselves. They would have objects to carry as well as their neighbours, and would unite to carry those objects. He says they have the machinery already. They have trades' unions and leaders, and the power of combination, and so describes the terrible and destructive things that you would do if you had the franchise, and he says of the House of Commons, "as long as we have not passed this bill, we are masters of the situation." Now, I have said often that I do not in the least blame the speaker for frankly speaking his sentiments. I think the sentiments are altogether erroneous. I think the courage which made him express them very unfortunate, but I only consider the sentiments of importance because they were welcomed with enthusiasm, and apparently by an unanimous consent, by the whole Tory party in the House. But there is another gentleman who does not sit on our side of the House, and who now, by favour of Lord Derby, governs 100,000,000 of people in British India. That gentleman sits for a rotten borough also. If the member for Calne sits by favour of one marquis, the member for Stamford sits by favour of another marquis; and he was the man who assailed Mr. Gladstone with an unusual—perhaps in him not unusual—but with a notable animosity, because Mr. Gladstone said that the great body of the unenfranchised men of England were worthy of consideration, for they were our own flesh and blood. I say that the House of Commons, according to the spirit and meaning of the British constitution, and according to the spirit and meaning of its own standing orders, has no right to admit within its walls any man representing not a free constituency of his countrymen, but representing only a single lord and peer of the realm. Now, if there be in that House of Commons not a few of this class; if there be many representatives of half-a-dozen great landowners who sit for counties, is it to be wondered at that liberal measures make so small and difficult

progress within the walls of that House. I was very much struck towards the end of the last session by an answer that was given to me by one of the most accomplished members of that House, who has taken his seat there only since the last election, and I believe there is no man in the House whose opinion on a point like this is more worthy of attention. I asked him, as he had sat there from the beginning of the session, say from February till the month of June, what he thought of the House of Commons. His answer was given to me in language of positive sorrow. He said that he was shocked and discouraged, by what he had seen, for he said, I think this is a House in which no good can be done. Now, for what are we met here to-night, and for what did—I will not say one hundred or two hundred thousand, or a quarter of a million, but a multitude whom no man could count,—why did that multitude to-day quit all its usual labours and avocations, march long miles through your country, to gather on your neighbouring moor? It was to protest against this state of things, and if possible, to change it, and we are resolved—now, you agree with me—we are resolved—(great cheering, the meeting rising, and waving handkerchiefs)—that every member who sits in the House of Commons shall have a free constituency and that the working men in the United Kingdom shall form a fair portion of every free constituency. We propose, in fact, to restore the representation, and to restore the fair and free action of the English constitution. We believe that there is a spirit created in London, in Birmingham, in South Lancashire, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, in the Newcastle and Durham district, and in Glasgow and the west of Scotland,—there is a power rising which, fairly combined, can do all this. The working men must combine, and they must subscribe. A penny a week or a penny a month from the thousands and from the millions would raise funds that would enable you to carry on the most gigantic and successful agitation that this country has ever seen. It is mainly your own voice that will decide your own fate. I do not quite agree with some of the observations of our chairman,—the observations which have been made to-night, as if there were a chasm between you and the middle class. It is not so, and it ought not to be so, and if you will take out small boroughs, in which the middle class themselves are not independent, you will find in nearly all the great towns of the kingdom that there is a powerful middle class influence in favour of the enfranchisement of the working classes; and bear in mind further, that even of that higher class in the social scale—that class which has great wealth, and high title, and great privilege, that in the history of England there has always been men to stand out from that class, and to contend for liberty with the great body of their countrymen. If the nation is to be split into two parts, and there is to be a wide gulf between, there is nothing for the future but subjection or violence, for without this you are powerless to attain your ends. But, working with a large portion of the middle class, and with the most intelligent and just of the highest social class, we may find these great measures accomplished without the violation of public peace, and without any disruption of the general harmony which ought to prevail throughout all classes of the people. Therefore I say this, rely mainly upon yourselves, for you are the great nation excluded. See what you have done. I am not saying this to flatter,

for no word of flattery to the working class or to any other class ever passed my lips; but when I look over this country, and see the cities you have built, the railroads you have made, the manufactures you have produced, the cargoes which freight the ships of the greatest mercantile nation the world has ever seen,—when I see that you have converted by your labour what was once a wilderness, these islands, into a fruitful garden,—when I know that you have created this wealth, and that you are a nation whose name is a word of power throughout all the world,—then I feel confident, by your united exertions, in conjunction with the middle class, you can overthrow for ever the domination of the class of which you complain. The few meetings which have been held since the close of the last session of Parliament have had a prodigious effect. There are newspaper writers who could not see a bit from January to July, and now the scales are, as it were, dropping from their eyes, and this gradual improvement of vision is going on most extensively throughout the country, and it is said now that the Tories are half repenting the course which they took during the last session. And when I say that Lord Derby is not a reformer they charge me with railing at Lord Derby, and they say that it is a positive case of injustice to charge the Tories with being hostile to reform. Well, my memory may not be as accurate as that of some people, but I do recollect that during the last session 280 gentlemen who call themselves Tories objected to Mr. Gladstone's bill because it proposed to admit, according to Mr. Gladstone's estimate, 204,000 working men, some of the unenfranchised 5,000,000, to the suffrage. It may be that the Tories did not care about this, and that all they wanted was power and place. Now, Lord Derby, in the speech which he made just after he came into office, intimated in very distinct language that if he had refused to accept it when the Queen offered it it would have been the break up of his party, for they had looked on the Treasury benches so long, and with such intenseness of vision, with such eagerness, with such hunger for what there is there, that if he, even for six months, had not allowed them to get there, they would have said that he was not worth following—that they gave up the chase, and would not follow it any longer. Well, for this what did they do? They wasted a whole session. They have disturbed the whole country, and having made these great meetings necessary, they have disgusted and estranged the unenfranchised classes merely to supplant Earl Russell in one House and Mr. Gladstone in the other. In America there are many political parties. There is a party that is always seeking office, and it goes by the name of "the bread and butter party," and it turns out after all that the party of Lord Derby is not an anti-reform party, but a bread and butter party. For six months' office, or it may run to nine or twelve months, they have rejected an honest and good measure, they have betrayed the true interests of the people,—and I believe I have seen men on that bench who would sell the mace, which is the symbol of loyalty, on the table of the House, if by doing so they could give to themselves fixity of tenure on the ministerial benches. Now, I must ask you in all seriousness to let the country know what is our object, what we propose, and how far we are honestly asking for what we believe to be good. I shall not appeal to the writers in newspapers, one of

whom, and not a very creditable one, is concealed somewhere in this town. I shall appeal only to the truth-loving vast majority of the people of this country. Our object is this, to restore popular representation in this country, and to make the House of Commons the organ and representative of the nation, and not of a small class of it. If you look over all the world you will now see that representation is extending everywhere, and the degree of its completeness is becoming the measure of national liberty, not only on the North American continent, but in the nations and kingdoms of old Europe. I have mentioned the North American continent. To-morrow is a great day in the United States, when perhaps millions of men will go to the poll, and they will give their votes on the question whether justice shall or shall not be done to the liberated African, and in a day or two we shall hear the result, and I shall be greatly surprised if that result does not add one more proof to those already given, of the solidity, intelligence, and public spirit of the great body of the people of the United States. I have mentioned the North American continent. I refer to the colonies which are still part of this empire as well as to those other colonies which now form a great and free republic. It was towards the end of the fifteenth century that the grand old Genoese discovered the new world. A friend of mine, Cyrus W. Field, of New York—is the Columbus of our time, for after no less than forty passages across the Atlantic in pursuit of the great aim of his life, he has, at length, by his cable, moored the new world close alongside the old. To speak from the United Kingdom to the North American continent, and from North America to the United Kingdom, is now but the work of a moment of time, and it does not require the utterance even of a whisper. The English nations are brought together and they must march on together. The spirit of either Government must be the same, although the form may be different. A broad and generous freedom is the heritage of England, and our purpose is this, to establish that freedom for ever on the sure foundation of a broad and generous representation of the people.

SPEECHES AT GLASGOW.

On the 16th of the same month, having been invited to address the Reformers of Glasgow, Mr. Bright visited that city on the occasion of the Reform Demonstration; and in the City Hall in the evening he delivered the following speech to an overflowing and enthusiastic audience. He said :—

Mr Chairman, and citizens of no mean city,—I accept this address which has been read in your hearing and presented to me, with a feeling of deep gratitude to those who have expressed such friendly feelings towards me, but with a deep

anxiety when I consider the intent and purport of the document. I am consoled by regarding it as in some degree a compact or covenant entered into to-night by you and those whom you represent, with me and those whom I may be supposed in some degree to represent, and that we covenant together that whatsoever is moral for us to do we engage to do in the prosecution of that great cause which has stirred the heart of Glasgow to-day. I can do but little—any one man can do but little; but you in your vast numbers can do much, and, uniting with numbers, not smaller in other parts of the kingdom, I have a strong sense that the day is fast approaching which will see the triumph of our cause, and I think he must be blind and foolish indeed who is not willing to admit that it is a great issue which is now submitted to the people of the United Kingdom. Gatherings of scores of thousands of men, extending from south to north, must have some great cause. Men do not leave their daily labour, the necessary occupations of their lives, thus to meet, unless they believe there is some great question submitted to them in which they have a deep and overpowering interest. And the question is this—Whether in future the government and the legislation of this country shall be conducted by a privileged class in a sham Parliament, or on the principles of the constitution of the nation, through its representatives, fairly and freely choosen. Now there are persons who will think that I am speaking harshly of the existing Parliament. Some probably in this meeting may think that Mr. Beales was indiscriminate in the term which he used when he spoke of our representation being steeped in corruption; but I am certain that if the representation of this country existed in any other country, and that its details were explained to Englishmen, there are not five Englishmen within the bounds, or five Britons within the bounds of this island, who would not admit that the language he has applied to the Parliament was correct. Now, what we charge against the Parliament is this—that it is chosen from constituencies not only so small that they do not and cannot adequately represent the nation, but from constituencies so small as to be influenced by corruption, and by all kind of motives that are neither national nor patriotic. In our boroughs, for example, the numbers for the most part are very small. There are, I think, 254 burghs in the United Kingdom, but there are only 54 of these that possess a constituency of 2,000 electors and upwards, and large and fair constituencies are indeed the exception. In Scotland, your burgh constituencies, though not generally very large, are larger than those in England, and to your honour it must be said that they are far more incorrupt than English constituencies. In the counties the freeholders—those who hold land for cultivation—are constantly diminishing in numbers, and that portion of the constituencies which is not composed of freeholders, is composed of tenant farmers—the most dependent class of occupiers, probably in the nation. But now, let me point to one or two facts which should sink deep in the minds of all men. Out of every 100 grown men in the United Kingdom 84 have no votes. Those 84 might just as well, for all purposes of constitutional government, so far as they are directly concerned—those 84 might as well live in Russia, where there is no electoral system of government, or in those other countries, now very few indeed, in which Parliaments and representations are unknown. If it be the fact that only sixteen men out of every hundred have votes, it is also the fact that those 16 are so arranged, and so placed, that their representation is in

reality almost entirely destroyed. If the electors were fairly divided amongst all the members, there would be nearly 2,000 electors to every member; but what is the state of things? Why, that one-third of the House of Commons, or 220 members, are actually elected by 70,000 votes—that is to say, that 220 members of the House of Commons are chosen by a number of men scattered over the country, who are fewer by almost one-half than the number of grown men in this city of Glasgow alone. And further, one-half of the House of Commons is chosen by about 180,000 electors, being only one-seventh of the whole number of electors, and much below the number of men who are to be found in the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. And if we come to that great event which excites so much interest, but which is generally of so little value—a general election—we find, I believe, that not more than 10 in 100—not more than ten per cent. of the whole grown-up male population of the United Kingdom ever come to the poll and give their vote for the election of a new Parliament. Now, with regard to a general election, some of you have read, and many of you know something of the cost and corruption of a general election. I will give you one instance and one proof of it. It has been my opinion all along that it was the duty of the Government of Lord Russell, after the defeat of their Reform Bill during the last session, to have dissolved the Parliament. I have no reason to disbelieve what is asserted, that Lord Russell himself was of that opinion, but a general election was a burden which the members of Parliament did not wish to bear. I was speaking to a member of the Government on this question about the time when the resignation of the late Government was just about to be submitted to the Queen, and I was telling him that I thought the true policy, the constitutional policy, of the Government was to dissolve the Parliament. A portion of his answer was this:—A member who sits on our side of the House had spoken to him about it. He said, "My election has already cost me £6,000"—and he added, "I have, besides, £3000 more to pay." He said further, what was very reasonable, that this was a heavy burden, that it was grievous to be borne, that it put him to exceeding inconvenience, and, if the Parliament were dissolved, he could not afford to fight his county or his borough, as the case might be, but would be obliged to retire from the field, and leave the contest, if there should be a contest, to some one else. You will believe, then, that the Government were greatly pressed by this consideration, and this consideration, added, it may be, to others, induced them to resign office rather than to dissolve Parliament. Thus you have a proof that whereas general corruption and putridity are the destruction of most bodies which they affect, the corruption of the present Parliament was, and is, the cause of its present existence. Now bear in mind that this state of things which I have been describing obtains at the present moment, 34 years after the passing of the great Reform Bill. What the Government must have been before that bill was passed it is scarcely possible to describe or to imagine; but I have no doubt of this, that it was one of the worst governments in civilised countries, and in Europe; and I think this may be fairly argued from the fact of the incessant wars in which the country was engaged for 150 years before that reform; from the enormous debt that was created; from the crushing taxes that were fixed upon the people; and, worse almost than that, from that most infamous law which ever passed a Parliament of civilised men—the law which limited the supply of bread to the

people. Now, if the Clerk of the House of Commons were placed at Temple Bar, and if he had orders to tap upon the shoulder every well-dressed and apparently cleanly-washed man who passed through that ancient bar, until he had numbered 658; and if the Crown summoned these 658 to be the Parliament of the United Kingdom, my honest conviction is that you would have a better Parliament than now exists. Now this assertion will stagger some timid and some good men; but let me explain myself to you. It would be a Parliament, every member of which would have no direct constituency, but it would be a Parliament that would act as a jury that would take some heed of the facts and arguments laid before it. It would be free, at any rate, from the class prejudices which weigh upon the present House of Commons. It would be free from the overshadowing pressure of what are called noble families. It would owe no allegiance to great landowners, and I hope it would have fewer men amongst it seeking their own gains by entering Parliament. With the Parliament which we have now and have had, facts and arguments go for very little. Take that question to which I have referred, of limiting the supply of bread to the people. The corn law was on the statute-book for 31 years—16 years before the Reform Bill, and 15 years after the passing of that bill—but from the first hour of its enactment until the hour of its destruction the facts and the arguments against it were equally clear and equally conclusive. They would not be convinced though one rose from the dead, and that which convinced them at last was the occurrence of a great famine in Ireland, which destroyed or drove from the country hundreds of thousands of the citizens of the empire. I maintain with the most perfect conviction that the House of Commons, representing as it now does counties and boroughs such as I have described, does not represent the intelligence and the justice of the nation, but the prejudices, the privileges, and the selfishness of a class. Now, what are the results of this system of legislation? Some of them have been touched upon in that address which has been so kindly presented to me. You refer to the laws affecting land. Are you aware of a fact which I saw stated the other day in an essay on this subject—that half the land of England is in the possession of fewer than 150 men? Are you aware of the fact that half the land in Scotland is in the possession of not more than 10 or 12 men? Are you aware of the fact that the monopoly in land in the United Kingdom is growing constantly more and more close? And the result of it is this—the gradual extirpation of the middle class as owners of land, and the constant degradation of the tillers of the soil. Take a matter about which many Scotch farmers know something—take the perpetual grievance of the game laws. In the House of Commons that question can scarcely be discussed. The landed interest, as it did in the late cattle plague debate, tramples down Government and borough members and everybody and everything that thwarts their inclination. Take the general—I am sorry to say the too general—subserviency of the tenant farmers in the matter of elections in your country—in Scotland. I entertain the hope that you will lead the way to the deliverance of the farmers from this slavery. In the last elections for Kincardineshire and for Aberdeenshire, the tenant farmers have taken the politics of those counties into their own hands. I hope, and I believe, that the tenant farmers of Scotland—the most enlightened agriculturists that live on the face of the earth—I hope they,

with perfect justice, and perfect courtesy to their landowners, will still exert their legitimate and right influence in the election of members for the counties of Scotland. But take—what some of you cannot comprehend—take the helpless poverty of the farm labourers in the southern counties of England. Their wages are very low. Their helplessness is extreme. Their power to deliver themselves—their power to combine seems at the lowest ebb. Look at their ignorance! A friend of mine—a member of the House of Commons, who lives within six miles of the Royal town and Castle of Windsor, told me only the other day that he knew the case of a family near his house in which there had grown up eleven children, not one of whom could read or write in the least degree. And he said that he had lately had in his employ upon his property seven men, of whom four could neither read nor write, two of them could read most imperfectly, and one of them could read and write about as well as the other two could read. Bear in mind that all this exists within six miles of the Royal Castle of Windsor. It exists in a neighbourhood where lords and squires and established clergymen swarm. Such is the state of ignorance of that population at this moment. In the county from which I come, girls of the age of from fifteen to twenty years are earning; many of them, I believe, double the weekly wages of the able-bodied farm labourer, the head and father of a family, in some of the southwestern counties of England. But what must be the ignorance of that population with such wages offering to them in Lancashire and Yorkshire that they scarcely hear of them. They seem to have no aspiration to better their condition, and there is no sensible emigration from these wretched counties to the more prosperous counties of the north. Your address refers to pauperism—the gulf of pauperism. In the United Kingdom at this moment there are more than 1,200,000 paupers. The pauperism of the United Kingdom last year—and it will not cost less, I believe, this year—cost the ratepayers—those who pay taxes for the relief of the poor—more than seven a half millions sterling, and this does not include many thousands of vagrants who also come occasionally under the name of paupers. Now look, I beg of you, to this mass of misery. It is so great a mass that benevolence cannot reach it. If benevolence could do it, there would be no pauperism in England, for in no country do I believe that there is more benevolence than there is in the United Kingdom. The kindness of the women of England is beyond all measure and beyond all praise of mine. There does not exist among created beings, beneath the angelic ranks, those who are more kind and charitable than the women of the United Kingdom. But benevolence can touch scarcely the fringe of this vast disorder. There is another virtue we could add, and that virtue and that quality is justice. It is not benevolence but justice that can deal with giant evils. It was not benevolence that gave the people bread twenty years ago, but it was justice embodied in the abolition of a cruel and a guilty law. But justice is impossible from a class. It is most certain and easy from a nation; and I believe we can only reach the depths of ignorance and misery and crime in this country by an appeal to the justice, the intelligence, and the virtue of the entire people. That address has mentioned another question—the question of your national expenditure, of your army and navy; and I will state only one fact with regard to the navy. I believe since the great war, since 1815, that the navy of this country has cost more than four

hundred millions sterling. I believe that during the last six years it has cost as much as the United States navy during the same time: we have been in a condition of profound peace; the United States have had to build or buy six hundred ships, to man them, to furnish them with munitions of war, and to fight them during the greatest struggle that any nation ever waged. And yet at this moment, after spending so much, we have Sir John Pakington, the great reconstructor, coming into office, and promising, not to extend the liberties of the people, but to reconstruct a navy on which such enormous and countless sums have already been sunk. Then, take the taxes. Well, something has been done to make the taxes more equal; but take the taxes which are levied under the name of probate and legacy and succession duties; and I will give you a case which it is just possible you have heard before from my lips. A member of the House of Commons—at least he was so when he gave me this fact, though I am sorry to say he is not one now—a member of the House of Commons told me he had had left to him by a person not related to him by blood an estate in land worth £21,000; the timber upon it was worth £11,000; altogether £32,000. The tax, when the property is left to a person who is not a relation of the man who leaves it, is 10 per cent.; the tax therefore on £32,000 would be £3,200; and if any one of you received a legacy like that in cash, in shares, in ships, in stock-in-trade, in any of those things which are not lands and houses, he would pay £3,200. But my friend receiving his legacy in land, and the timber upon it, paid just £700. And why? For this reason only, that the law was made by a landed and propertied Parliament, and the owners and inheritors of lands and houses were considered specially worthy of its regard. But I may be asked—and no doubt some man who, after this meeting, will take up his pen to write a criticism on my speech, or upon this meeting, will ask—how comes it, if Parliament is so bad, that so many good things have been done by Parliament during the last thirty or forty years? I acknowledge that good things have been done, and I ought to know, because I have been concerned in the doing of some of them. But by whom were they done? Mainly by that force in Parliament which is sent there by the great and free borough constituencies of the kingdom. The members for the great towns—although but a minority, and not a very large minority—are the moving force by which these good things have been done. It has not been the policy of the Tories to do good things—and I have seen the time when the Whigs have been much less zealous about them than I could have wished. They have sprung from the people, and the people have carried them. What there has been of real representation in Parliament has urged these measures forward. What there has been of sham representation has uniformly opposed these measures. Now, I am of opinion that the rich people of a country, invested with power, and speaking generally for rich people alone, cannot sufficiently care for the multitude and the poor. They are personally kind enough, but they do not care for the people in the bulk. They have read a passage in Holy Writ that "The poor ye have always with you"—and therefore they imagine that it is a providential arrangement that a small section of the people should be rich and powerful, and that the great mass of the people should be hardworking and poor. It is a long distance from castles, and mansions, and great houses,

and abounding luxuries, to the condition of the great mass of the people who have no property, and too many of whom are almost always on the verge of poverty. We know very well all of us how much we are influenced by the immediate circumstances by which we are surrounded. The rich find everything just as they like. The country needs no reform. There is no country in the world so pleasant for rich people as this country. But I deny altogether that the rich alone are qualified to legislate for the poor, any more than that the poor alone would be qualified to legislate for the rich. My honest belief is, that if we could be all called upon to legislate for all, that all would be more justly treated, and would be more happy than we are now. We should have then an average; we should have the influence of wealth and of high culture, and of those qualities that come from leisure, and the influence of those robuster qualities that come from industry and from labour. Suppose now, without arguing for this or that particular measure of Reform, that we could add another million to the existing constituencies, what would be the result? We should modify the constituencies. Instead of the people coming to the hustings at the nomination and holding up their hands for this candidate or that, and having for the most part no power in the election, the inhabitants of the town would have a much greater power than they have now. The constituency would be less open to management than it is at present; majorities on one side or the other would be larger and less open to corruption; and we should have members whose opinions and whose conduct would be modified by this infusion of new and fresh blood into the constituencies which send them to Parliament. We should do this further—we should bring the rich and the great more into contact with the people, and into a better acquaintance with human wants and with the necessities and feelings of their countrymen. What other thing would happen? I dare venture to assert this, that Parliament then would not revile and slander the people as it does now. Nor would it cheer with frantic violence when their countrymen are described in hideous and hateful colours. Probably what I call the Botany Bay view of their countrymen would be got rid of, and we should have a sense of greater justice and generosity in the feeling with which they regard the bulk of the nation. And if there was more knowledge of the people there would assuredly be more sympathy with them; and I believe the legislation of the House, being more in accordance with the public sentiment, would be wiser and better in every respect. The nation would be changed. There would be amongst us a greater growth of everything that is good. I should like to ask if there are any ministers of religion in this audience. I have sometimes thought that I should like to have an audience of 4,000 or 5,000 of them, to whom I could preach a political sermon, and to whom I could tell something which I fear their theological schools have failed to teach them. An eminent man of your country, the late Dr. Chalmers, in speaking of the question of free trade, and particularly of the struggle for the abolition of the corn laws, uttered some memorable words. He said he thought there was nothing that would tend so to sweeten the breath of British society as the abolition of the corn laws. I believe now that there is nothing which would tend so to sweeten the breath of British society as the admission of a large and generous number of the working classes to citizenship and the exercise of the franchise. Now, if my words

should reach the ears and reach the heart of any man who is interested in the advancement of religion in this country, I ask him to consider whether there are not great political obstacles to the extension of civilisation and morality and religion within the bounds of the United Kingdom. We believe—these ministers, you, and I—we believe in a Supreme Ruler of the Universe. We believe in His omnipotence; we believe and we humbly trust in His mercy. We know that the strongest argument which is used against that belief, by those who reject it, is an argument drawn from the misery, and the helplessness, and the darkness of so many of our race, even in countries which call themselves civilised and christian. Is not that the fact? If I believed that that misery, and that helplessness, and that darkness could not be touched or transformed, I myself should be driven to admit the almost overwhelming force of that argument; but I am convinced that just laws, and an enlightened administration of them, would change the face of the country. I believe that ignorance and suffering might be lessened to an incalculable extent, and that many an Eden, beauteous in flowers and rich in fruits, might be raised up in the waste wilderness which spreads before us. But no class can do that. The class which has hitherto ruled in this country has failed miserably. It revels in power and wealth, whilst at its feet, a terrible peril for its future lies—the multitude which it has neglected. If a class has failed, let us try the nation. That is our faith, that is our purpose, that is our cry—Let us try the nation. This it is which has called together these countless numbers of the people to demand a change; and, as I think of it, and of these gatherings, sublime in their vastness and in their resolution, I think I see, as it were, above the hill tops of time, the glimmerings of the dawn of a better and a nobler day for the country and for the people that I love so well.

On the following morning Mr. Bright was entertained at a public breakfast at the Cobden Hotel, in the same city, when several speeches were delivered. Mr. Bright spoke as follows, after a reference to the complimentary remarks to himself of previous speakers:—

Passing away from sentiment to business, it occurs to me that, although it is now a long time since Scotland and England were united as one country, and although they are, as I believe, for ever, so far as we can see, inseparably united, yet, being in Scotland, it is hardly possible to consider any public question without some direct reference to Scottish interests. The position of this part of the United Kingdom on the question of reform is one very peculiar, and one having a special interest. Scotland has as I think every fair man will admit, not her proper share in the composition of the House of Commons. I am not quite certain now what is the increaesd number of members that Scotland should have, judging arithmetically from her population, her wealth, and her contribution to the public taxes; but I think the increase should not be much short of twenty members. In a bill

which I brought before the public soon after I was here eight years ago, and for the preparation of which I was greatly indebted to my hon. relative the member for Edinburgh—in that bill I think I proposed that an addition of fifteen or sixteen—Mr. M'Laren says he thinks it was eighteen—additional members, should be given to Scotland. In the bill which the late Government introduced to the House of Commons, I think the addition proposed was seven. That was a measure of partial, rather of scanty, justice; but still it was looked upon with extreme jealousy, and was met by a strong threatened opposition on the part of the Tory party in the House. I am not very much surprised at the jealousy and the threatened opposition which I find in discussing the question of Reform. The Tories, members of the present Government, their supporters in Parliament, and their newspapers, constantly regard the question as one which is to add power to or take power from a given party. They discuss it as if it were not a question—as it is not with them—of justice to all the people, and of a fair representation to all classes, but as it may interfere with and affect their particular party interests. Therefore it was not to be wondered at that, seeing the condition of the representation of Scotland, the members of the present Government, then the leaders of the Opposition, and their friends in Parliament, should look with great hostility upon any proposition that proposed to transfer members from small, corrupt, and rotten boroughs in England, to independent, moral, and sober constituencies in this part of the island. But the English people, I believe, certainly the English reformers, have no such jealousy, because they accept freely the entire, the thorough, the perpetual union of the two countries, and therefore they regard every Scotchman as they regard an Englishman in this question of reform, and they have this additional inducement to do so, because they know at least that the Scottish people in their representation will do as well for England and for Englishmen certainly as any part of England does for itself or for Scotland. Your representation is in a peculiar position, as compared with that of any other portion of the United Kingdom. In the first place, you send no Tory members for any of your boroughs. There are two of your borough members, who did not behave very well during the last session of Parliament, and who, I believe, disappointed their constituencies very much; and if their constituencies had been sitting in the gallery of the House of Commons, and had heard all that took place, I am not sure that their doubts of the fidelity of those members would not have been very much strengthened. But still your borough constituencies are in this condition—that not only do they return no Tory to Parliament, but there is no Tory party in any one of those boroughs sufficiently strong to feel itself justified in proposing a Tory candidate for the approbation of the constituency. That is a very satisfactory state of things. I could give some reasons for it which probably have not struck some people in England, and perhaps have not occurred to people in Scotland. One reason is that you have no boroughs so small as the very small boroughs in England; secondly, that your population, as a whole, stands in a higher position with regard to education and political intelligence; and thirdly, you have in Scotland (I speak of the Established, apart from what may be called the Free Churches) a church establishment which, though I think a church establishment may be considered to be politically and reli-

giously an evil, yet you have a church establishment of a liberal and even of a republican form of government as compared with the hierarchical establishment of England. And in Scotland the boundaries of the Established Church do not, with any degree of accuracy, if they do at all, mark out the boundaries of a political party. In England it is otherwise, and the Established Church of England is, in point of fact (with, of course, a multitude of exceptions), the Tory party of England. These are the reasons, I believe, why in this country your representation is, in my opinion, so much more creditable to your intelligence and advantageous to the empire than that of other parts of the United Kingdom. Your counties, however, are not in a position so distinguished as your boroughs; but I was glad to have the testimony two years ago of one of your county members, and a highly respectable member too, to the fact that the counties were, as I think, making progress, but as doubtless, he thought, were going backward. I met him in the Highlands, and in the intervals of some Highland games that were proceeding we discussed a little of politics, and the difference between the constituencies of Scotland and England. He said, with rather a melancholy air and sadness in his voice, "Yes, you have got all the boroughs in Scotland," meaning the Liberal party, "and you are gradually taking all the counties." That statement has received some confirmation since then. Two counties to which I referred last night, Kincardineshire and Aberdeenshire, have returned members not of that party which has hitherto dominated amongst the landed proprietors, and there is some reason to believe that the complaint which has made its appearance among the tenant farmers of those counties may prove infectious or contagious, and may spread over their borders and infect other counties as well. I cannot believe, for example, that in the county of Haddington the tenant farmers will consent to be represented long as they are now. When I look back to the conduct of the member for that county at the last election on the hustings; when I look to his conduct in the House of Commons with regard to the requirements and interests of the people, and in connection with this question of reform, I will never believe, until the Scotch people are wholly changed, that there can be in any county of Scotland a population, or an electoral body even, that can be in favour of representation by a gentleman whose performances have been so marked in a direction adverse, as I believe, and as I think they believe, to the true interests of the people. The Scottish farmers are, probably, the best agriculturists in Europe, and it is a great pleasure, not only to travel through the Highlands of your country, but to travel through the Lowlands, where there is so much fertility, and where the harvests bear testimony to the industry and skill of the cultivators. But it is a melancholy thing to think that those men who can do so much with the soil should be in any degree acting under a sort of traditional subserviency to the owner of the soil, and neglecting or refusing to exercise freely the powers which the constitution has placed in their hands. The fault is far more obvious and far more grievous in England; but as Scotch farmers have led the farmers of the United Kingdom in a wise and successful cultivation of the soil, I know not why they should not lead them in that emancipation from the political domination of their landlords, which, I am sure, before many years, will come not only in Scotland, but through every portion of the United Kingdom. Mr.

Crawford has referred to the transactions of yesterday. I was present at the great meeting and the great procession in Birmingham. I heard much of the meeting in Manchester, and also of that which was held last week in the West Riding of Yorkshire. I am certain the transactions of yesterday do not fall below in any degree those to which I have referred. I will not venture upon language of great eulogy upon what I saw, but for three hours there passed before this window a procession of men. I think the smallest and most moderate computation of their numbers, made with regard to the speed they passed, would bring the procession to a number exceeding 50,000, and probably reaching 60,000 men. Look at their demeanour, look at their dress, look at the character stamped upon their countenances, look at the variety of the industries which they represented, look at the feeling of pride they had in the noble labours in which their lives are spent. Take into consideration all this, and say whether it be right, and whether it be safe—for that is the dogma of the Tory party—perpetually to deny to these men those common rights which belong to all the citizens of this country, upon the known and admitted principles of the British constitution. Your motto is, "Let Glasgow flourish!" But what would Glasgow be without the men who formed that procession? And what would your country be, what would be the United Kingdom, what would this empire be, if the men of their class could, by any sudden change, be taken from amongst us? The nation would dwindle into no nation at all, and those men who from their heights of power and wealth look down upon the multitude whose business it is to labour and obey the law, and yet have no share in making that law,—those men would be at once dethroned from being the apparent leaders of a great nation, and would themselves, incompetent as they are, have to descend to works of common labour, which they now despise. There was one thing I was delighted to see yesterday. It was evident in Birmingham as much as it was evident here,—more evident in Birmingham than it was in Manchester and in Leeds,—that there seemed to be a great union of all classes in the proceedings. Employment for the time appeared to have ceased, except that employment which was the business of the day. There seemed to be—I may be speaking from inadequate means of observation—but there felt to me throughout yesterday as if the men who lived in the great houses around us had a sympathy in the purposes in which the great body of the people were engaged. If that be so, it augurs well for the cause; and I think it desirable should be known throughout every portion of the kingdom, for I am satisfied that the influence of yesterday's proceedings will not end with yesterday; it will not end with Glasgow and the west of Scotland, but it will be felt in every portion of the United Kingdom. It is quite clear that this movement in which we are engaged is beginning to be, and has already assumed the proportions of a national movement. What was done in London three months ago was as nothing to what can be done in London now, when those who are leading the movement undertake to set it in motion again. Birmingham was all alive, and if there were any opposed they were in holes and corners, out of sight; but, in fact, in Birmingham there are very few to oppose, and I must say when they do oppose, they do it with a moderation and an absence of rancour that I have scarcely seen in any other part of the kingdom. In Manchester there was a downpour of rain, as we say in Lancashire, from six o'clock in the

morning to four o'clock in the afternoon, and f there had not been something as robust in the politics as there is in the health and character of Lancashire working men, it would have been impossible to have had on that day any great demonstration of numbers. In Yorkshire, those who saw the procession and the meeting say there was never anything like it in the West Riding during the memory of the oldest politician. If this matter has assumed a national character, as I believe it has, may we not hope that, before long, it may produce some great and decisive result? I am going, I suppose now, within a fortnight from this time, to pay a visit to some, I will say, like our chairman, too kind friends of mine in the city of Dublin. I have been invited to attend a public banquet and be the guest of certain persons who form a very favourable opinion of my political career. Irish questions, no doubt, will be discussed more than questions, as we should say, clearly affecting the whole empire; but I believe the whole empire is deeply interested in what we commonly call "Irish questions." I should like to tell the Irish people that there is no disposition on the part of the people of Great Britain, whether of England or of Scotland, to do them injustice. The injustice they have suffered has been from the governing classes in England, and from the governing classes in Ireland. It has not been from the people of the United Kingdom—and the more speedily and the more entirely the nation of the three kingdoms is admitted to its fair share in parliamentary power, the more speedily and more completely will justice be done to Ireland, and justice also be as fully done and secured to and for the whole people of the United Kingdom. I shall say no more but to tell you I have had singular pleasure in coming to Glasgow on this occasion; but I am, as you may suppose, always very much happier the morning after a great meeting than I am the morning before it; for I feel, notwithstanding no little practice in public speaking, and no little familiarity with the subjects to be discussed, a sense of a very heavy responsibility which I cannot shake off. I have been placed, in connection with this question, in a very prominent position, altogether unsought for by me. I have no anxiety to be a leader in politics, or to be lionised in great cities; but from my youth upwards I have had a horror and a hatred of that which is unjust to the people. It was that feeling that led me to join one of whom I cannot speak without a faltering voice in that great labour in which we worked so long together, the abolition of the monopoly in food, and now if I am engaged more prominently than some men may think I ought to be in this question, it is because I would wish to join my countrymen in striking down monopoly of a wider influence, and which, when it is gone, ten or twenty years afterwards, all thoughtful and good men in the country will rejoice at as much as they now rejoice that the monopoly, the stupid and ignorant monopoly, of the landowners no longer limits the supply of food to a great people.

SPEECHES AT DUBLIN.

On the 30th of October Mr. Bright was entertained at a Banquet in the Rotunda, Dublin, and on rising to respond to the toast of his health, the hon. gentleman was greeted with enthusiastic cheers, which continued for a considerable time, the entire company standing, and the ladies in the gallery waving their handkerchiefs. When silence was restored, Mr. Bright said:

Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I feel myself more embarrassed than I can well describe, at the difficult but still honourable position in which I find myself to-night. I am profoundly moved by the exceeding and generous kindness with which you have received me, and all I can do is to thank you for it, and to say how grateful to my heart it is that such a number as I see before me—I will say of my countrymen—have approved generally of the political course which I have pursued. But I may assure you that the difficulty of this position is not at all of my seeking. I heard during the last session of Parliament that if I was likely to come to Ireland during the autumn, it was not improbable that I should be asked to some banquet of this kind in this city. I had an intention of coming, but being moved by this kindness or menace, I changed my mind, and spent some weeks in Scotland instead of Ireland. When I found from the newspapers that an invitation was being signed, asking me to come here, I wrote to my honourable friend, Sir John Gray, to ask him if he would be kind enough to put an extinguisher upon the project, inasmuch as I was not intending to cross the Channel. He said that the matter had proceeded so far that it was impossible to interfere with it—that it must take its natural course, and the result was that I received an invitation signed, I think, by about 140 names, amongst whom there were not less, I believe, than twenty-two members of the House of Commons. Well, as you will probably imagine, I felt that this invitation was of that nature that, although it was most difficult to accede to it, it was impossible to refuse it, and that accounts for my being here to-night, and is a simple explanation of what has taken place. I said amongst the signatures were the names of not less than 22 members of the House of Commons. I speak with grief when I say that one of our friends who signed that invitation is no longer with us. I had not the pleasure of a long acquaintance with Mr. Dillon, but I shall take this opportunity of saying that during the last session of Parliament I formed a very high opinion of his character. There was that in his eye and in the tone of his voice—in his manner altogether, which marked him for an honourable and a just man. I venture to say that his sad and sudden removal is a great loss to Ireland. I believe amongst all her worthy sons, Ireland has had no worthier and no nobler son than John Blake Dillon. I shall not be wrong if I assume that the ground of my visit to Dublin is to be found first in the sympathy which I have always felt and expressed for the condition, and for the wrongs, and for the rights of the people of Ireland, and probably also because I am supposed, in

some degree, to represent some amount of the opinion in England, which is also favourable to the true interests of this island. The Irish question is a question that has often been discussed, and yet it remains at this day as much a question as it has been for centuries past. The Parliament of Kilkenny, a Parliament that sat a very long time ago, if indeed it was a Parliament at all—it was a Parliament that sat about 500 years ago, that I believe proposed to inflict a very heavy penalty if any Irishman's horse was found grazing on any Englishman's land, and it was a Parliament which left on record a question, which it may be worth our while to consider to-night—it put to the King this question, "How comes it to pass that the King was never the richer for Ireland?" We, 500 years afterwards, venture to ask this question, "Why is it that the Queen, or the Crown, or the United Kingdom, or the Empire, is never the richer for Ireland,"—and if you will permit me I will try to give you as clearly as I can something like an answer to that very old question. What it may be followed by is this, How is it that we, the Imperial Parliament, cannot act so as to bring about in Ireland contentment and tranquillity, and a solid union between Ireland and Great Britain? and that means further, how can we improve the condition and change the minds of the people of Ireland? Some say, I have heard many who say it in England, and I am afraid there are Irishmen also who would say it, that there is some radical defect in the Irish character which prevents the condition of Ireland being so satisfactory as is the condition of England and of Scotland. Now, I am inclined to believe that whatever there is that is defective in any portion of the Irish people comes not from their race, but from their history, and the conditions to which they have been subjected. I am told by those in authority that in Ireland there is a remarkable absence of crime. I have heard since I came to Dublin, from those well acquainted with the facts, that there is probably no great city in the world—in the civilised and Christian world—of equal population with the city in which we are now assembled, where there is so little crime committed. And I find that that portion of the Irish people which has found a home in the United States has in the period of sixteen years—between 1848 and 1864—remitted about £13,000,000 sterling to their friends and relatives in Ireland. I am bound to place these facts in opposition to any statements that I hear as to any radical defects of the Irish character. I say that it would be much more probable that the defect lies in the Government and in the law. But there are some others who say that the great misfortune of Ireland is in the existence of the noxious race of political agitators. Well, as to that I may state, that the most distinguished political agitators that have appeared during the last 100 years in Ireland are Grattan and O'Connell, and I should say that he must be either a very stupid or a very base Irishman who would wish to erase the achievements of Grattan and O'Connell from the annals of his country. But some say (and this is not an uncommon thing)—some say that the priests of the popular church in Ireland have been the cause of much discontent. I believe there is no class of men in Ireland who have a deeper interest in a prosperous and numerous community than the priests

of the Catholic Church; and further, I believe that no men have suffered more—have suffered more I mean, in mind and in feeling, from witnessing the miseries and the desolation which during the last century (to go no further back) have stricken and afflicted the Irish people. But some others say that there is no ground of complaint, because the laws and institutions of Ireland are, in the main, the same as the laws and institutions of England and Scotland. They say, for example, that if there be an Established Church in Ireland there is one in England and one in Scotland, and that Nonconformists are very numerous both in England and in Scotland; but they seem to forget this fact, that the Church in England or the Church in Scotland is not in any sense a foreign church—that it has not been imposed in past times, and is not maintained now by force — that it is not in any degree the symbol of conquest, that it is not the church of a small minority, absorbing the ecclesiastical revenues and endowments of a whole kingdom; and they omit to remember or to acknowledge that if any Government attempted to plant by force the Episcopal Church in Scotland or the Catholic Church in England, the disorders and discontent which have prevailed in Ireland would be witnessed with tenfold intensity and violence in Great Britain. And these persons whom I am describing also say that the land laws in Ireland are the same as the land laws in England. It would be easy to show that the land laws in England are bad enough, and that but for the outlet of the population, afforded by our extraordinary manufacturing industry, the condition of England would in all probability become quite as bad as the condition of Ireland has been; but if the countries differ with regard to land and the management of it in their customs, may it not be reasonable that they should also differ in their laws? In Ireland the landowner is the creature of conquest, not of conquest of 800 years ago, but of conquest completed only 200 years ago; and it may be well for us to remember, and for all Englishmen to remember, that succeeding that transfer of the land to the new comers from Great Britain, there followed a system of law, known by the name of the penal code, of the most ingenious cruelty, and such as, I believe, has never in modern times been inflicted on any Christian people. Unhappily, on this account, the wound which was opened by the conquest has never been permitted to be closed, and thus we have had landowners in Ireland of a different race, of a different religion, and of different ideas from the great bulk of the people, and there has been a constant and bitter war between the owners and occupiers of the soil. Now, up to this point I suppose that even the gentlemen who were dining together the other evening in Belfast would probably agree with me, because what I have stated is mere matter of notorious history to be found in every book which has treated of the course of Irish affairs during the last two hundred years. But I think they would agree with me even further than this. They would say that Ireland is a land which has been torn by religious factions, and torn by these factions at least in the North as much as in the South; and I think they would be doing less than justice to the inhabitants of the North if they said that they had in any degree come short of the people of the South in the intensity of their passionate

feelings with regard to their church. But Ireland has been more than this —it has been a land of evictions—a word which, I suspect, is scarcely known in any other civilised country. It is a country from which thousands of families have been driven by the will of the landowners and the power of the law. It is a country where have existed, to a great extent, those dread tribunals known by the common name of secret societies, by which, in the pursuit of what some men have thought to be justice, there have been committed crimes of appalling guilt in the eye of the whole world. It is a country, too, in which, and it is the only Christian country of which it may be said for some centuries past—it is a country in which a famine of the most desolating character has prevailed even during our own time. I think I was told in 1849, as I stood in the burial ground at Skibbereen, that at least 400 people who had died of famine were buried within the quarter of an acre of ground on which I was then looking. It is a country, too, from which there has been a greater emigration by sea within a given time than has been known at any time from any other country in the world. It is a country where there has been, for generations past, a general sense of wrong, out of which has grown a state of chronic insurrection; and at this very moment when I speak, the general safeguard of constitutional liberty is withdrawn, and we meet in this hall, and I speak here to-night, rather by the forbearance and permission of the Irish executive than under the protection of the common safeguards of the rights and liberties of the people of the United Kingdom. I venture to say that this is a miserable and a humiliating picture to draw of this country. Bear in mind that I am not speaking of Poland suffering under the conquest of Russia. There is a gentleman now a candidate for an Irish county, who is very great upon the wrongs of Poland; but I have found him always in the House of Commons taking sides with that great party which has systematically supported the wrongs of Ireland. I am not speaking about Hungary, or of Venice as she was under the rule of Austria, or of the Greeks under the dominion of the Turk, but I am speaking of Ireland—part of the United Kingdom—part of that which boasts itself to be the most civilised and the most Christian nation in the world. I took the liberty recently, at a meeting in Glasgow, to say that I believed it was impossible for a class to govern a great nation wisely and justly. Now, in Ireland there has been a field in which all the principles of the Tory party have had their complete experiment and development. You have had the country gentleman in all his power. You have had any number of acts of Parliament which the ancient Parliament of Ireland or the Parliament of the United Kingdom could give him. You have had the Established Church supported by the law, even to the extent, not many years ago, of collecting its revenues by the aid of military force. In point of fact, I believe it would be impossible to imagine a state of things in which the principles of the Tory party have had a more entire and complete opportunity for their trial than they have had within the limits of this island. And yet what has happened? This, surely. That the kingdom has been continually weakened—that the harmony of the empire has been disturbed, and that the mischief has not been confined to the United Kingdom, but has spread to the colonies. And at this moment, as we know by every arrival

from the United States, the colony of Canada is exposed to danger of invasion—that it is forced to keep on foot soldiers which it otherwise would not want, and to involve itself in expenses which threaten to be ruinous to its financial condition, and all that it may defend itself from Irishmen hostile to England, who are settled in the United States. In fact, the Government of Lord Derby at this moment is doing exactly that which the Government of Lord North did nearly a hundred years ago—it is sending out troops across the Atlantic to fight Irishmen who are the bitter enemies of England on the American continent. Now, I believe every gentleman in this room will admit that all that I have said is literally true. And if it be true, what conclusion are we to come to? Is it that the law is bad which rules in Ireland and the people good, or that the law is good and the people bad? Now, let us, if we can, get rid for a moment of Episcopalianism, Presbyterianism, Protestantism, and Orangeism on the one hand, and of Catholicism, Romanism, Ultramontanism on the other,—let us for a moment get beyond all these "isms," and try if we can discover what it is that is the matter with your country. I shall ask you only to turn your eye upon two points—the first is the Established Church, and the second is the tenure of land. The church may be said to affect the soul and sentiment of the country, and the land question may be said to affect the means of of life and the comforts of the people. Now, I shall not blame the bishops and clergy of the Established Church. There may be, and I doubt not there are, amongst them many pious and devoted men, who labour to the utmost of their power to do good in the district which is committed to their care; but I venture to say this, that if they were all good and all pious, it would not in a national point of view compensate for this one fatal error—the error of their existence as the ministers of an Established Protestant Church in Ireland. Every man of them is necessarily in his district a symbol of the supremacy of the few and of the subjection of the many; and although the amount of the revenue of the Established Church as the sum payable by the whole nation may not be considerable, yet bear in mind that it is often the galling of the chain which is more tormenting than the weight of it. I believe that the removal of the Established Church would create a new political and social atmosphere in Ireland—that it would make the people feel that old things had passed away—that all things had become new—that an Irishman and his faith were no longer to be condemned in his own country—and that for the first time the English people and the English Parliament intended to do full justice to Ireland. Now, leaving the Established Church, I come to the question of the land. I have said that the ownership of the land in Ireland came originally from conquest and from confiscation, and, as a matter of course, there was created a great gulf between the owner and the occupier, and from that time to this doubtless there has been wanting that sympathy which exists to a large extent in Great Britain, and that ought to exist in every country. I am told—you can answer it if I am wrong—that it is not common in Ireland now to gives leases to tenants, especially to Catholic tenants. If that be so, then the security for the property of the tenant rests only upon the good feeling and favour of the owner of the land, for the laws, as we know, have been

made by the landowners, and many propositions for the advantage of the tenants have unfortunately been too little considered by Parliament. The result is that you have bad farming, bad dwelling-houses, bad temper, and everything bad connected with the occupation and cultivation of land in Ireland. One of the results—a result the most appalling—is this, that your population are fleeing from your country and seeking a refuge in a distant land. On this point I wish to refer to a letter which I received a few days ago from a most esteemed citizen of Dublin. He told me that he believed that a very large portion of what he called the poor, amongst Irishmen, sympathised with any scheme or any proposition that was adverse to the Imperial Government. He said further, that the people here are rather in the country than of it, and that they are looking more to America than they are looking to England. I think there is a good deal in that. When we consider how many Irishmen have found a refuge in America, I do not know how we can wonder at that statement. You will recollect that when the ancient Hebrew prophet prayed in his captivity he prayed with his window opened towards Jerusalem. You know that the followers of Mahommed, when they pray, turn their faces towards Mecca. When the Irish peasant asks for food, and freedom, and blessing, his eye follows the setting sun; the aspirations of his heart reach beyond the wide Atlantic and in spirit he grasps hands with the great Republic of the West. If this be so, I say, then, that the disease is not only serious, but it is even desperate; but desperate as it is, I believe there is a certain remedy for it, if the people and the Parliament of the United Kingdom are willing to apply it. Now, if it were possible, would it not be worth while to change the sentiments and improve the condition of the Irish cultivators of the soil? If we were to remove the State Church there would still be a church, but it would not be a supremacy church. The Catholics of Ireland have no idea of saying that Protestantism in its various forms shall not exist in their island. There would still be a church, but it would be a free church of a section of a free people. I will not go into details about the change. Doubtless every man would say that the present occupants of the livings should, during their lifetime, not be disturbed; but if the principle of the abolition of the State Church were once fixed and accepted, it would not be difficult to arrange the details that would be satisfactory to the people of Ireland. Now, who objects to this? The men who are in favour of supremacy, and the men who have a fanatical hatred of what they call Popery. To honest and good men of the Protestant Church and of the Protestant faith there is no reason whatever to fear this change. What has the voluntary system done in Scotland? What has it done amongst the Nonconformists of England? What has it done amongst the population of Wales? and what has it done amongst the Catholic population of your own Ireland? In my opinion the abolition of the Established Church would give Protestantism itself another chance. I believe there has been in Ireland no other enemy of Protestantism so injurious as the Protestant State Establishment. It has been loaded for 200 years with the sins of bad government and bad laws, and whatever may have been the beauty and the holiness of its doctrine or

of its professors, it has not been able to hold its ground, loaded as it has been by the sins of a bad government. One effect of the Established Church has been this, the making Catholicism in Ireland not only a faith but a patriotism, for it was not likely that any member of the Catholic Church would incline in the slightest degree to Protestantism so long as it presented itself to his eyes as a wrong doer and full of injustice in connection with the government of his country. But now, if honest Protestantism has nothing to fear from the change that I would recommend, what has the honest landowner to fear? The history of Europe and America for the last one hundred years affords scarcely any picture more painful than that which is afforded by the landowners of this kingdom. The Irish landowner has been different from every other landowner, for the bulk of his land has only been about half cultivated, and he has had to collect his rents by a process approaching the evils of civil war. His property has been very insecure—the sale of it sometimes has been rendered impossible. The landowner himself has often been hated by those who ought to have loved him. He has been banished from his ancestral home by terror, and not a few have lost their lives without the sympathy of those who ought to have been their protectors and their friends. I would like to ask, what can be much worse than this? If in this country 50 years ago, as in Prussia, there had arisen statesmen who would have taken one-third or one-half the land from the landowners of Ireland, and made it over to their tenants, I believe that the Irish landowner, great as would have been the injustice of which he might have complained, would in all probability have been richer and happier than he has been. Now, what is the first remedy which you would propose? Clearly this—that which is the most easily applicable and which would most speedily touch the condition of the country. It is this—that the property which the tenant shall invest or create in his farm shall be secured to the tenant by law. I believe that if Parliament were fairly to enact this it would make a change in the whole temper of the country. I recollect in the year 1849 being down in the county of Wexford. I called at the house of an old farmer of the name of Stafford, who lived in a very good house, the best farmhouse, I think, that I had seen since leaving Dublin. He lived on his own farm, which he had bought fifteen years before. The house was a house which he had himself built. He was a venerable old man, and we had some very interesting conversation with him. I asked how it was he had so good a house? He said the farm was his own, and the house was his own, and, as no man could disturb him, he had made it a much better house than was common for the farmers of Ireland. I said to him, "If all the farmers of Ireland had the same security for the capital they laid out on their farms, what would be the the result?" The old man almost sprang out of his chair, and said—"Sir, if you will give us that encouragement, we will *bate* the hunger out of Ireland." It is said that all this must be left to contract between the landlord and the tenant; but the public, which may be neither landlord nor tenant, has a great interest in this question; and I maintain that the interests of the public require that Parliament should secure to the tenant the property which he has invested in his farm. But I would not stop here.

There is another, and what I should call a more permanent and far-reaching remedy for the evils of Ireland, and those persons who stickle so much for political economy I hope will follow me in this. The great evil of Ireland is this—that the Irish people—the Irish nation—are dispossessed of the soil, and what we ought to do is to provide for, and aid in, their restoration to it by all measures of justice. Why should we tolerate in Ireland the law of primogeniture? Why should we tolerate the system of entails? Why should the object of the law be to accumulate land in great masses in few hands, and to make it almost impossible for persons of small means, and tenant farmers, to become possessors of land? If you go to other countries —for example, to Norway, to Denmark, to Holland, to Belgium, to France, to Germany, to Italy, or to the United States, you will find that in all these countries those laws of which I complain have been abolished, and the land is just as free to buy and sell, and hold and cultivate, as any other description of property in the kingdom. No doubt your Landed Estates Court and your Record of Titles Act were good measures, but they were good because they were in the direction that I want to travel further in. But I would go further than that; I would deal with the question of absenteeism. I am not going to propose to tax absentees; but if my advice were taken, we should have a Parliamentary commission empowered to buy up the large estates in Ireland belonging to the English nobility, for the purpose of selling them on easy terms to the occupiers of the farms and to the tenantry of Ireland. Now, let me be fairly understood. I am not proposing to tax absentees; I am not proposing to take any of their property from them; but I propose this, that a Parliamentary commission should be empowered to treat for the purchase of those large estates with the view of selling them to the tenantry of Ireland. Now, here are some of them—the present Prime Minister Lord Derby, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Fitzwilliam, the Marquis of Hertford, the Marquis of Bath, the Duke of Bedford, the Duke of Devonshire, and many others. They have estates in Ireland; many of them, I dare say, are just as well managed as any estates in the country; but what you want is to restore to Ireland a middle-class proprietary of the soil; and I venture to say that if these estates could be purchased and could be sold out farm by farm to the tenant occupiers in Ireland, that it would be infinitely better in a conservative sense, than that they should belong to great proprietors living out of the country. I have said that the disease is desperate, and that the remedy must be searching. I assert that the present system of Government with regard to the church and with regard to the land has failed disastrously in Ireland. Under it Ireland has become an object of commiseration to the whole world and a discredit to the United Kingdom, of which it forms a part. It is a land of many sorrows. Men fight for supremacy, and call it Protestantism; they fight for evil and bad laws, and they call it acting for the defence of property. Now, are there no good men in Ireland of those who are generally opposed to us in politics—are there none who can rise above the level of party? If there be such, I wish my voice might reach them. I have often asked myself whether patriotism is dead in Ireland? Cannot all the people of Ireland see that the calamities of their country are the

creatures of the law, and if that be so, just laws can only remove these calamities. Now, if Irishmen were united—if your 105 members were for the most part agreed, you might do almost anything that you liked—you might do it even in the present Parliament; but if you are disunited, then I know not how you can gain anything from a Parliament created as the Imperial Parliament is now. The class that rules in Britain will hear your cry as it has heard it before, and will pay no attention to it. They will see your people leaving your shores, and they will think it no calamity to the country. They know that they have force to suppress insurrection, and, therefore, you can gain nothing from their fears. What, then, is your hope? It is in a better Parliament, representing fairly the United Kingdom—the movement which is now in force in England and Scotland, and which is your movement as much as ours. If there were 100 more members, the representatives of large and free constituencies, then your cry would be heard, and the people would give you that justice which a class has so long denied you. The great party that is now in power—the Tory party—denies that you have any just cause of complaint. In a speech delivered the other day in Belfast, much was said of the enforcement of the law; but there was nothing said about any change or amendment in the law. With this party terror is their only specific, and they have no confidence in allegiance except where there is no power to rebel. Now, I differ from these men entirely. I believe that at the root of a general discontent there is in all countries a general grievance and general suffering. The surface of society is not incessantly disturbed without a cause. I recollect in the poem of the greatest of Italian poets, he tells us that as he saw in vision the Stygian lake, and stood upon its banks, he observed the constant commotion upon the surface of the pool, and his good instructor and guide explained to him the cause of it—

> "This, too, for certain know, that underneath
> The water dwells a multitude, whose sighs
> Into these bubbles make the surface heave,
> As thine eye tells thee wheresoe'er it turn."

And I say in Ireland for generations back, that the misery and the wrongs of the people have made their sign, and have found a voice in constant insurrection and disorder. I have said that Ireland is a country of many wrongs and of many sorrows. Her past lies almost all in shadow. Her present is full of anxiety and peril. Her future depends on the power of her people to substitute equality and justice for supremacy, and a generous patriotism for the spirit of faction. In the effort now making in Great Britain to create a free representation of the people you have the deepest interest. The people never wish to suffer, and they never wish to inflict injustice. They have no sympathy with the wrongdoer, whether in Great Britain or in Ireland; and when they are fairly represented in the Imperial Parliament, as I hope they will one day be, they will speedily give an effective and final answer to that old question of the Parliament of Kilkenny—"How comes it to pass that the King has never been the richer for Ireland." (The honourable gentleman resumed his seat amid the most enthusiastic demonstrations of applause.)

On the following day (Wednesday) Mr. Bright received a deputation from the Cork Farmers' Club, by whom he was presented with an address thanking him for his services to Ireland and for his efforts to improve the condition of the occupiers of the land. In acknowledging the address, Mr. Bright said :—

I am in a much greater difficulty than I should be if I had 3,000 or 4,000 people to speak to on an occasion of this kind. I observe in the second paragraph of the address which you have kindly brought, that you refer to supposed services which I have rendered to the cause of humanity and freedom. The fact is, I feel what I suppose everybody feels who is honestly engaged in public life—that after a good deal of work, of many years of labour, very little has been done, for the world seems to move on very slowly, and what any man can do to make it move appears to be very little. But I have always had the opinion that a people are very much what their laws make them. I entirely disbelieve those theories which assume that it does not matter very much what kind of laws you have—that, after all, everything depends on a man's self. A great deal depends on a man's self, but a great deal depends on the laws; and I think, if we trace history back and look over the countries we know something of, we shall find that the people are in the main what their laws and institutions make them. Now, my mind, from a very young age, has led me always to a feeling that laws should be equal and should be just; that all the people living in a country have an equal right to be considered and well treated by the institutions and laws under which they live. In this country, more perhaps than in almost any other country in Europe, that has not been the principle on which the government has been conducted, because it is quite clear that the laws have been made until recently by a party, or rather for the supremacy of a party more than for the whole people; and as regards the land, which is the question to which you particularly refer, there can be no kind of doubt of this, that the laws have been absolutely the product of the selfishness and ignorance of the landed proprietors, and by no means the product of the general intelligence of all classes in this country. It is the same to a great extent in England, where, as Mr. Murphy knows perfectly well, in the House of Commons there are questions which you can discuss with an expectation that they will be fairly considered; but if you come to any question connected with the land, with the supremacy of that particular property in the country, argument is of no avail whatever, and the slightest tendency to what I would call intelligence and justice with regard to that is met by the most determined opposition by the great landowning classes in the House. Of course, there are many admirable exceptions there, as there are here; but, on the whole, the great weight of that party and class is directed against any wise change in regard to the laws affecting property in land. Now, twenty years ago, they thought we were going to ruin them when we were proposing to allow foreign corn to come to the country free of duty; and I believe there were

many of them who did absolutely believe that their estates would be of no value, and that, as far as landowning went in Great Britain and Ireland, the world was about coming to an end. They find, now, they have got rid of all the odium of that system, and at the same time they have not got rid of their land, but their land is of more value than it was before. Certainly in England farmers are in a more satisfactory position than they were before. The whole tone of society in England is wonderfully improved by the change which took place in 1846. I believe that, if in England and in Ireland the laws of political economy were applied to land, we should find just as great a change from this point forward with regard to matters which are influenced by laws affecting land, as we have found in past times by the abolition of the laws which prevented the importation of corn. I remember my lamented friend, Mr. Cobden, who was not likely to undervalue the effect of free trade in corn, saying, on more than one occasion, that the men who hereafter would entirely free the land—place the laws with regard to land on a just and satisfactory footing—would at least confer as great a benefit upon the people as he and those of that former agitation had been able to confer, by the success of our movement. He was no mean judge of such a matter, and his opinion is worth taking note of, for he was not a man of violent party feeling at all, but judged this question, perhaps, with a dispassionateness and intelligence which have never been exceeded by any public man amongst us. Now, there is this difficulty in discussing the whole Irish question. The great Church party is the Tory party. The boundaries which mark out the limits of the Established Church are almost the boundaries which mark out the limits of the Tory party. They think that if the Irish Church were got rid of—if the voluntary principle were established as the universal practice in Ireland—that principle would by-and-by cross the Channel, and raise an equal contest to be settled in like manner in Great Britain; and although if you were at the Antipodes (I am speaking of the church as a political institution) you might sweep it off the face of the earth and there would be no tears shed in the House of Commons; yet being so near home, they have no doubt a great dread that the same thing would be asked for and done hereafter in England. And so with regard to land in a degree not less obvious. They think that the concession of any measure of tenant right or security for a tenant for his improvements, would be followed by a coercive movement on the part of the tenants in England and Scotland; and in England and Scotland the tenantry are so powerful, that if they once put their heads in one direction there is no possibility of withstanding them. They are much more powerful than the tenants are here, because you, acting alone, have to act upon a great and powerful body in London. If you had a parliament in College Green, clearly the tenantry of Ireland, with the present feeling in Ireland, would be able to force that parliament to any measure of justice they desired; but as you have to deal with a great parliament sitting at London, all the clamour you make, the demands you may urge from this side of the Channel, come with a very feeble effect in London, especially as it can only be represented by about one hundred members, and of those it unfortunately happens that a considerable number are not willing

to support the demands that are made. But if, in England the tenantry, and in Scotland the tenant farmers—the most capable and most intelligent agriculturists perhaps in the world—if they were to join in favour of measures, such as measures hostile to the game laws, hostile to any injustice which is supposed to exist with regard to the improvement of the tenants, it would be quite impossible for the Parliament to resist their demands. You see, therefore, the great difficulty you have to contend with. You have to wrest your rights from a Parliament sitting in London, to which you send 105 members. Perhaps half are not in favour of your rights, and, therefore, the 50 who are so are lost in the 600 they find there, and the effort on the part of your members to do anything is one of the most disheartening things that any representative of the people can have to do. I have, since I have been in Parliament, which is now 23 years, heard a hundred times, nay, much oftener, blame attached to the Irish members for the little they do there. I believe that at this moment the Irish Liberal members are the most respectable, and the most respected and influential of all the Irish Liberal members that have sat in Parliament for the last 23 years. That is my opinion. I think it is admitted in the House of Commons, universally, that the Irish Liberal members of this Parliament are not inferior, but are superior to the Irish Liberal members that sat in former Parliaments during the last 25 years; but, notwithstanding that, and although I think they have a corresponding increase of influence, yet it is one of the most difficult things in the world for fifty men, acting amongst 600 men, some hundreds of miles from those whom they represent, to work up any question which may be against the prejudices and sympathies of the 600 amongst whom they are acting, and, therefore, Irish constituencies, whilst they should make no allowance in favour of those members who are not honest towards them and do not do their duty, yet for those who are honest and do their duty, they should make allowance. They have difficulties in the Parliament in London which are vastly greater than the difficulties of an English member, or than those the Irish members would find if their Parliament was sitting in this country. Now, what can be done with regard to this question? I say I don't know that I can do much. I have always given what support I could to any proposition that appeared to me reasonable and right on this question in Parliament. During the last session we had the great advantage of the assistance of a most eminent man, the member for Westminster, Mr. J. Stuart Mill. He made an admirable speech in favour of tenant improvement, and a speech which I have no doubt had a considerable effect on the House; but I trust more to two things than to any others in regard to this question. The first is the necessities of party if this Government goes out, which is not a thing impossible, and is a thing, probably to be desired. Another Government coming in will no doubt be under a distinct pledge to endeavour to settle this land question upon some sensible and just arrangement, and from that something may be gained; but I believe what we have most to rely upon is the hope that before long we shall have a better representation. There is nothing in the world more certain than this, that if you call a meeting in any part of Great Britain where you have got a fair average of middle class people or working

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class people, and you will state to them in such a manner as I have been accustomed to—state with any degree of conciseness and fairness what you want in this respect,—I believe you will not find a sensible man to dissent from the proposition that these questions are questions of great importance, and ought to be entertained and adjusted by the Government and Parliament. And, therefore, if the time should come—and I hope it is not far distant,—that the people are let in and that Parliament is more popular, if you like, more democratic, the complaints made from this side of the Channel will be listened to there with more attention, and your 100 members, or so many of them as may be in favour of justice to Ireland, will find an increased and increasing power there to sympathise with them, and bring these questions to some wise and just arrangement. I don't know that I have any more to say. I am very sensible of your kindness, and it appears to me almost unreasonable that any of the citizens of Cork should come so far on this occasion and address me in the manner you have done. The Irish question has been to me one of great interest from my earliest connection with public life. I knew Mr. O'Connell with a certain intimacy, and when I was a very young member of the House of Commons, I often, if I found an opportunity, sat by him, for I found his conversation not only very amusing but very instructive. He knew everybody, and almost everything, and his comments on all that passed were very pleasant to listen to, and often very informing. I don't know how—whether it is from a natural love of what is just or not—but I always had a great sympathy with the Irish people and Irish questions, and as long as I remain in Parliament, or in public life, or in life at all, and am capable of thinking, I believe I shall be of opinion that we in this generation do owe it to ourselves, and owe it to Ireland, to make such amends as we can for an amount of neglect, and cruelty, and injustice committed in the past, such as I think no civilised or Christian nation has ever inflicted on another Christian nation. I thank you most sincerely for your great kindness to me, and I hope you may rely upon it that whatever I have done from that sympathy in past times, I shall not withhold in the future. Only you must not exaggerate what I can do or what anybody else can do; but if you get your members to unite cordially with the really Liberal party which is every day growing in England, I hope by and by you will have gained something. If we regret the darkness of the past of Ireland, we may do something to make us hope for a brighter and pleasanter prospect for the future.

On the 2nd of November Mr. Bright attended a meeting of the Working Men of Dublin, in the Theatre of the Mechanics' Institution, James Haughton, Esq., in the Chair. An address of welcome to Mr. Bright was presented to him, amid loud and general cheering. The address expressed the thanks of the working men of Ireland to Mr. Bright, and stated that the Irish people had no hope of relie from an English House of Commons as at present constituted. Mr. Bright, in acknowledging the address, said:—

When I came to your city I was asked if I would attend a public meeting on the question of Parliamentary Reform. I answered that I was not in good order for much speaking, for I have suffered, as I am afraid you will find before I come to the end of my speech, from much cold and hoarseness, but it was urged upon me that there were at least some, and not an inconsiderable number, of the working men of this city who would be glad if I would meet them; and it was proposed to offer to me some address of friendship and confidence such as that which has been read. I have no complaint to make of it, but this, that whilst I do not say it indicates too much kindness, yet that it colours too highly the small services which I have been able to render to any portion of my countrymen. Your countrymen are reckoned generally to be a people of great gratitude and of much enthusiasm, and, therefore, I accept the address with all the kindness and feelings of friendship with which it has been offered, and I hope it will be, at least in some degree, a stimulant to me, in whatever position in life I am placed, to remember, as I have ever in past times remembered, the claims of the people of this island to complete equal justice with all portions of the people of the United Kingdom. Now, there may be persons in this room, I should be surprised if there were not, who doubt whether it is worth their while even to hope for substantial justice, as this address says, from a Parliament sitting in London. If there be such a man in this room let him understand that I am not the man to condemn him or to express surprise at the opinion at which he has arrived. But I would ask him in return for that, that he would give me at least for a few minutes a patient hearing, and he will find that, whether justice may come from the north or the south, or the east or the west—(cries of "The West," and great cheering)—I, at any rate, stand as a friend to the most complete justice to the people of this island. When discussing the question of Parliamentary Reform, I have often heard it asserted that the people of Ireland, and I am not speaking of those who are hopeless of good from a Parliament in London, but that the people of Ireland generally imagine that the question of Parliamentary Reform has very little importance for them. Now I undertake to say, and I think I can make it clear to this meeting, that whatever be the importance of that question to any man in England or Scotland, if the two islands are to continue under Imperial parliamentary government, it is of more importance to every Irishman. You know that.

the Parliament of which I am a member contains 658 members, of whom 105 cross the Channel from Ireland, and when they go to London they meet—supposing all the members of the House of Commons gathered together—553 members, who are returned for Great Britain. Now, suppose that all your 105 members were absolutely good and honourable representatives of the people of Ireland—I will not say Tories, or Whigs, or Radicals, or Repealers, but anything you like,—let every man imagine that all these members were exactly the sort of men he would wish to go from Ireland, when the 105 arrive in London they meet with the 553 who are returned from Great Britain. Now, suppose that the system of Parliamentary representation in Great Britain is very bad, that it represents very few persons in that great island, and that those who appear to be represented are distributed in the small boroughs over different parts of the country, and in the counties under the thumb and finger of the landlords, it is clear that the whole Parliament, although your 105 members may be very good men, must still be a very bad Parliament. Therefore, if any man imagines—and I should think no man can imagine—that the representation of the people in Ireland is in a very good state—still, if he fancies it is in a good state—unless the representation of Great Britain were at least equally good, you might have a hundred excellent Irish members in Parliament at Westminster; but the whole 658 members might be a very bad Parliament for the United Kingdom. The member for a borough or a county in Ireland, when he goes to London, votes for measures for the whole kingdom; and a member for Lancashire or for Warwickshire, or for any other county or borough in Great Britain, votes for measures not only for Great Britain but also for Ireland, and therefore, all parts of the United Kingdom —every county, every borough, every parish, every family, every man—has a clear and distinct and undoubted interest in a Parliament that shall fairly and justly represent the whole nation. Now, look for a moment at two or three facts with regard to Ireland alone. I have stated some facts with regard to England and Scotland at recent meetings held across the Channel. Now for two or three facts with regard to Ireland. In Ireland you have five boroughs returning each one member, the average number of electors in each of these boroughs being only 172. You have 13 boroughs, the average number being 316. You have nine other boroughs with an average number of electors of 497. You have, therefore, 27 boroughs whose whole number of electors, if they were all put together, is only 9,453, or an average of 350 electors for each member. I must tell you further that you have a single county with nearly twice as many voters as the whole of those 27 boroughs. Your 27 boroughs have only 9,453 electors, and the county of Cork has 16,107 electors, and returns but two members. But that is not the worst of the case. It happens both in Great Britain and Ireland, wherever the borough constituencies are so small, that it is almost impossible that they should be independent; a very acute lawyer, for example, in one of those boroughs—a very influential clergyman, whether of your church or ours—when I say ours, I do not mean mine, but the Church of England—half-a-dozen men combining together, or a little corruption from candidates going with a well-filled purse,—these are the

influences brought to bear upon those small boroughs both in England and Ireland. A great many of them return their members by means of corruption, more or less, and a free and real representation of the people is hardly ever possible in a borough of that small size. But if I were to compare your boroughs with your counties, see how it stands. You have 39 borough members, with 30,000 electors, and you have 64 county members, with 172,000 electors. Therefore you see that the members are so distributed that the great populations have not one quarter of the influence in Parliament which those small populations in the small boroughs have. We come next to another question, which is of great consequence. Not only are those small boroughs altogether too small for independence, but if we come to your large county constituencies, we find that from the peculiar circumstances and the relations which exist between the voter and the owner of the land, there is scarcely any freedom of election. Even in your counties I should suppose that if there was no compulsion from the landowners or their agents, that in at least three-fourths of this island the vote of the county electors would be by a vast majority in favour of the Liberal candidates. I am not speaking merely of men who profess a sort of liberality which just enables them to go with their party, but I speak of men who would be thoroughly in earnest in carrying out, as far as they were able, in Parliament, the opinions which they were sent to represent by the large constituencies who elected them. The question of the ballot is, in my opinion, of the greatest importance in Great Britain and Ireland, but is of more importance in the counties than it is in the large boroughs. For example: in Great Britain, in such boroughs as Edinburgh and Glasgow, and Manchester and Birmingham, and the metropolitan boroughs, where the number of electors runs from 10,000 to 25,000, bribery is of no avail, because you could not bribe thousands of men. To bribe 100 or 200 would not alter the return at an election with so large a constituency. But what you want with the ballot is, that in the counties where the tenant farmers vote, and where they live upon their land without the security of a lease, or without the security of any law to to give them compensation for any improvements they have made upon the land, the tenant farmer feels himself always liable to injury, and sometimes to ruin, if he gets into a dispute with the agent or the landowner with regard to the manner in which he has exercised his franchise. And what will be very important also, if you have the ballot, your elections will be tranquil, without disorder and without riot. Last week, or the week before, there was an election in one of your great counties. Well, making every allowance that can be made for the supposed exaggerations of the writers of the two parties, it is quite clear to everybody that the circumstances of that election, though not absolutely uncommon in Ireland, were still such as to be utterly discreditable to a real representative system. And you must bear in mind that there is no other people in the world that considers that it has a fair representative system unless it has the ballot. The ballot is universal almost in the United States. It is almost universal in the colonies, at any rate in the Australian colonies; it is almost universal on the continent of Europe, and in the new parliament of North Germany, which is about soon to be assembled, every man of 25 years of age is to be allowed to vote, and to vote by ballot. Now, I hold, without any

fear of contradiction, that the intelligence and the virtues of the people of Ireland are not represented in the Parliament. You have your wrongs to complain of—wrongs centuries old, and wrongs that long ago the people of Ireland, and, I venture to say, the people of Great Britain united with Ireland—— My friend up there will not listen to the end of my sentence. I say that the people of Great Britain, acting with the people of Ireland, in a fair representation of the whole, would long ago have remedied every just grievance of which you could complain. Now, I will take two questions which I treated upon the other evening. I will ask about one question—that is, the question of the supremacy of the Church in Ireland. Half the people of England are Nonconformists. They are not in favour of an Established Church anywhere, and it is utterly impossible that they could be in favour of an Established Church in an island like this—an Established Church formed of a mere handful of the population, in opposition to the wishes of the nation. Now take the principality of Wales. I suppose that four out of five of the population there are Dissenters, and they are not in favour of maintaining a religious Protestant establishment in Ireland. The people of Scotland have also seceded in such large numbers from their Established Church, although of a democratic character, that I suppose those who have seceded are a considerable majority of the whole people,—they are not in favour of maintaining an ecclesiastical establishment in Ireland in opposition to the views of the great majority of your people. Take the other question,—that of land. There is nobody in Great Britain of the great town population, of the middle class, or of the still more numerous working class, who has any sympathy with that condition of the law and of the administration of the law which has worked such mischiefs in your country. But these Nonconformists, whether in England, Wales, or Scotland, these great middle classes, and still greater working classes, are in the position that you are. Only sixteen of every hundred have a vote, and those sixteen are so arranged that when their representatives get to Parliament they turn out for the most part to be no real representatives of the people. I will tell you fairly that you, as the less populous and less powerful part of this great nation—you of all the men in the United Kingdom, have by far the strongest interest in a thorough reform of the Imperial Parliament, and I believe that you yourselves could not do yourselves by yourselves more complete justice than you can do fairly acting with the generous millions of my countrymen in whose name I stand here. You have on this platform two members of the Reform League from London. I received yesterday, or the day before, a telegram from the Scottish Reform League, from Glasgow. I am not sure whether there is a copy of it in any of the newspapers, but it was sent to me, and I presume it was sent to me that I might read it if I had the opportunity of meeting any of the unenfranchised men of this city. It says: The Scottish Reform League request you to convey to the Reformers in Ireland their deep sympathy. They sincerely hope that soon in Ireland as in Scotland and England, Reform Leagues may be formed in every town to secure to the people their political rights. Urge upon our friends in Ireland their duty to promote this great movement, and to secure at home those benefits which

thousands of their fellow-countrymen are forced to seek in other lands—where land and State Church grievances are unknown. We also seek co-operation, knowing that our freedom, though secure to-morrow, would not be safe so long as one portion of the United Kingdom were less free than the others. There is the outspoken voice of the representatives of that great multitude that only a fortnight since I saw passing through the streets of Glasgow. For three hours the procession passed, with all the emblems and symbols of their various trades, and the streets for two or three miles were enlivened by banners, and the air was filled with the sounds of music from their bands. Those men but spoke the same language that was heard in the West Riding, in Manchester, in Birmingham, and in London, and you men of Dublin, and of Ireland, you never made a mistake more grievous in your lives than for you to come to the conclusion that there are not millions of men in Great Britain willing to do you full justice. I am very sorry that my voice is not what it was, and when I think of the work that is to be done sometimes I feel it is a pity we grow old so fast. But years ago, when I have thought of the condition of Ireland, of its sorrows and wrongs, of the discredit that its condition has brought upon the English, the Irish, and the British name, I have thought, if I could be in all other things the same, but by birth an Irishman, there is not a town in this island I would not visit for the purpose of discussing the great Irish question, and of rousing my countrymen to some great and united action. I do not believe in the necessity of widespread and perpetual misery. I do not believe that we are placed on this island, and on this earth, that one man might be great and wealthy, and revel in every profuse indulgence, and five, six, nine, or ten men should suffer the abject misery which we see so commonly in the world. With your soil, your climate, and your active and spirited race, I know not what they might not do. There have been reasons to my mind why soil and climate, and the labour of your population, have not produced general comfort and competence for all. The address speaks of the friendly feeling and the sympathy which I have had for Ireland during my political career. When I first went into the House of Commons the most prominent figure in it was Daniel O'Connell. I have sat by his side for hours during the discussions in that House, and listened to observations both amusing and instructive on what was passing under discussion. I have seen him, too, more than once upon our platform of the Anti-Corn-law League. I recollect that on one occasion he sent to Ireland expressly for a newspaper for me, which contained a report of a speech which he made against the corn law when the corn law was passing through Parliament in 1815, and we owe much to his exertions in connection with that question, for almost the whole Liberal—I suppose the whole Liberal—party of the Irish representatives in Parliament supported the measure of free trade of which we were the prominent advocates; and I know of nothing that was favourable to freedom, whether in connection with Ireland or England, that O'Connell did not support with all his great powers. I know nothing pleasanter, and hardly anything more useful, than personal recollections of this nature. Why is it, now, there should be any kind of schism between the Liberal people of

Ireland and the Liberal people of Great Britain? I don't ask you to join hands with supremacy and oppression, whether in your island or ours. What I ask you is, to open your heart of hearts, and join hands for a real and thorough working union for freedom with the great people of Great Britain. Before I sit down, I must be allowed to advert to a point which has been much commented upon—a paragraph in my speech made the other night with regard to the land. There are newspapers in Dublin which I need not name, because I am quite sure you can find them out—which do not feel any strong desire or conscientious compulsion to judge fairly anything I may say amongst the various measures which I propose for what I shall call the pacification, and redemption if you like, of the people of Ireland. It was this I said: "It is of the first importance that the people of Ireland, by some process or other, should have the opportunity of being made the possessors of their own soil. You will know perfectly well that I am not about to propose a copy of the villanous crimes of 200 years ago, to confiscate the lands of the proprietors, here or elsewhere. I propose to introduce a system which would gradually, no doubt rapidly and easily, without injuring anybody, make many thousands who are now tenant farmers, without lease and security, the owners of their farms in this island. This is my plan, and I want to restate it with a little further explanation, in order that these gentlemen to whom I have referred may not repeat the very untrue, and I may say dishonourable comments which they have made upon me. There are many large estates in Ireland which belong to rich families in England,—families not only of the highest rank, but of the highest character,—because I will venture to say there are not to be found amongst the English nobility families of more perfect honourableness and worth than some of those to whom my plan would be offered; and, therefore, I am not speaking against the aristocracy, against those families, or against property, or against any body, or against anything that is good. I say, that if Parliament were to appoint a commission, and give it, say, at first, up to the amount of five millions sterling, the power to negotiate or treat with those great families in England who have great estates in Ireland, it is probable that some of those great estates might be bought at a not very unreasonable price. I am of opinion it would be the cheapest money that the Imperial Parliament ever expended, even though it became possessed of those estates at a price considerably above the market price. But I propose it should be worked in this way. I will take a case. I will assume that this commission has got a considerable estate into its possession, bought from some present owner of it. I will take one farm, which I will assume to be worth £1,000, for which the present tenant is paying a rent of £50 a year. He has no lease. He has no security. He makes almost no permanent improvement of any kind; and he is not quite sure whether, when he has saved a little more money, he will not take his family off to the United States. Now we will assume ourselves, if you like, to be that commission, and that we have before us the farmer who is the tenant on that particular farm, for which he pays £50 a year, without lease or security, and which I assume to be worth £1,000. The Government, I believe, lends money to Irish landowners for drainage purposes at about 3½ per cent per annum. Suppose the Government were to

go to this farmer and say, "You would not have any objection to become possessed of this farm?" "No, not the slightest," he might say, "but how is that to be done?" In this way; tell the farmer—you may pay £50 a year, that is, 5 per cent. on one thousand pounds; the Government can afford to do these transactions for 3¼ per cent.; if you will pay £60 a year for a given number of years, which any of the actuaries of the insurance offices, or any good arithmetician may soon calculate,—if you will pay £60 for your rent, instead of £50, it may be fifteen, or twenty years, or more,—at the end of that time the farm will be yours, without any further payment. I want you to understand how this is. If the farmer paid ten pounds a year more towards buying his farm, the fact is, that the £1,000 the Government would pay for the farm would not cost the Government more than £35, and therefore the difference between £35 and £60 being £25, would be the sum which that farmer, in his rent, would be paying to the commission, that is, the Government, for the redemption of his farm. Thus, at the end of a very few years the farmer would possess his own farm, having a perfect security. All the time nobody could turn him out if he paid his rent, and nobody could touch him for any improvement he made on his land. The next morning after he made that agreement, he would speak to his wife and to his big boy, who had perhaps been idling about for a long time, and there would not be a stone on the land that would not be removed, not a weed that he would not pull up, not a particle of manure that he would not save; there would not be anything that he would not do with a zeal and an enthusiasm which he had never known before to cultivate that farm; and by the time the few years had run on when the farm should become his without any further purchase, he would have turned a dilapitated, miserable little farm into a garden for himself and family. Now, this statement may be commented on by some of the newspapers. You will understand that I do not propose a forced purchase, or confiscation. I would undertake even to give—if I were the Government—to every one of these landlords twenty per cent. more for his estate than it will fetch in any market in London or in Dublin, and I say that to do this would produce a marvellous change in the sentiments of the people, and in the condition of agriculture in Ireland. But I saw in one of the papers a question to which I may give a reply. It was said, how would you like to have a commission come down into Lancashire and insist on buying your factories? I can only say that if they will give me 10 per cent. or 20 per cent. more than they are worth they shall have them to-morrow. But I do not propose that the commission should come here and insist on buying these estates. They say, further,—Why should a man in Ireland keep his estate, and not a man in England who has an estate in Ireland? There is this difference. A man in Ireland, if he has an estate of 10,000 acres, it is probably his ancestral home. He has ties to this which it would be monstrous to think of severing in such a manner, but a man living in England, who is not an Irishman, and never comes over here except to receive his rents (which, by the way, he generally gets through his bankers in London), who has no particular tie to this country, and who comes over here occasionally merely because he feels that, as a great proprietor in Ireland, it would be scandalous never to show

his face on his property and amongst his tenants—to such a man there is nothing much of sentiment in it that he should not part with his land at a fair price. I have been charged with saying very severe things of the English aristocracy. Now, it is not true in the sense in which it is imputed to me. I have always said that there are many men in the English aristocracy who would be noblemen in the sight of their fellow-men, although they had no titles and no coronets. There are men amongst them of as undoubted patriotism as any man in this building, or in this island, and there are men amongst them, who when they saw that a great public object is to be served for the benefit of their fellow-men, would make as great sacrifices as any one of us would be willing to do. I am of opinion therefore,—I may be wrong, but I will not believe I am until it is proved,—I am of opinion that if this question were discussed in Parliament when the next Irish land question is discussed, and if there was a general sentiment in the House of Commons that some measure like this would be advantageous for Ireland, and if it were so expressed, it may be assumed that it would be accepted to a large extent by the people of the United Kingdom,—then I think that a commission so appointed would find no difficulty whatever in discovering noblemen and rich men in England, in Scotland too, who are the possessors of great estates in Ireland, who would be willing to negotiate for their transfer, and that commission, by the process I have indicated, might transfer them gradually but speedily to the tenant farmers of this country. I am told that I have not been much in Ireland, and do not know much of it. I recollect a man in England during the American war asking me a question about America. When I gave him the answer it did not agree with his opinion, and he said, "I think you have never been in America, have you?" I said I had not; and he replied, "Well, I have been there three times, and I know something of them." He was asking me whether I thought the Yankees would pay when they borrowed money to carry on the war; and I thought they would. But, as he had been there, he thought his opinion was worth more than mine. I told him I knew several people who had lived in England all their lives, and yet knew very little about England. I am told that if I were to live in Ireland longer amongst the people I should have a different opinion, that I should think the church of a small minority was honest, in the face of the great church of the majority; that I should think it was not the fault of the landowners or of the law in any degree, but the fault of the tenants that everything went wrong with regard to the land; and that I should find that it was the Government that was mostly right, and the legislation right, and that it was the people that were mostly wrong. There are certain questions with regard to any country that you may settle in your own house, never having seen that country even upon a map. This you may settle, that that which is just is just everywhere, and that men, from those of the highest culture even to those of the most moderate capacity, whatever may be their race, whatever their colour, have implanted in their hearts by their Creator; wiser much than these men, the knowledge and the love of justice. I will tell you that, since the day when I sat beside O'Connell—and at an earlier day, that I have considered this question of Ireland. In 1849, for

several weeks in the autumn, and for several weeks in the autumn of 1852, I came to Ireland expressly to examine these questions by consulting with all classes of the people in every part of the island. I will undertake to say that I believe there is no man in England who has more fully studied the evidence given before the celebrated Devon commission in regard to Ireland than I have. Therefore I dare stand up before any Irishman or Englishman to discuss the Irish question. I say that the plans, the theories, the policy of legislation of my opponents in this matter all have failed signally, deplorably disastrously, ignominiously, and, therefore, I say that I have a right to come in and offer the people of Ireland, as I would offer to the people of Great Britain and the Imperial Parliament, a wise and just policy upon this question. You know that I have attended great meetings in England within the last two months, and in Scotland also. I think that I am at liberty to tender to you from those scores, or hundreds of thousands of men the hand of fellowship and goodwill. I wish I might be permitted when I go back, as in fact, I think by this address that I am permitted to say to them, that amidst the factions by which Ireland has been torn, amidst the many errors that have been committed, amidst the passions that have been excited, amidst the hopes that have been blasted, and amidst the misery that has been endured, there is still in this island, and amongst its people, a heart that can sympathise with those who turn to them with a fixed resolution to judge them fairly, and to do them justice. (Loud cheers, which were prolonged for several minutes, the audience rising and waving their hats.) I have made my speech. I have said my say. I have fulfilled my small mission to you. I thank you from my heart for the kindness with which you have received me, which I shall never forget. And if I have in past times felt an unquenchable sympathy with the sufferings of your people, you may rely upon it that if there be an Irish member to speak for Ireland, he will find me heartily by his side.

SPEECH AT MANCHESTER.

At the great Reform Banquet in the Free-trade Hall, Manchester, November 20th, 1866, Mr. Bright, M.P., who was present, rose amidst enthusiastic cheering, continuing for several minutes, the greater part of the audience standing. He said :—

Although, perhaps, this is one of the most striking and important meetings which have been held in this country during the last few years, you will, perhaps, be surprised to learn that I came to it with a sense almost of indifference : not indifference as to its importance ; but with an absence of that feeling of responsibility which has pressed so much upon me, on some recent occassions. For the committee were kind enough to send round to

their guests a list of the speakers who were expected to address the meeting. I found them much more numerous than is common, and I found my name about half way down the list. I took it, therefore, for granted that I could come, for once, in some degree, as a spectator and a listener, rather than as a prominent actor at the meeting. Some gentlemen who were expected to be here are not here—Mr. Stansfeld, because he is ill; Mr. Layard, because he has not returned from the Continent. And Mr. Forster, who seems less able to occupy the time of an audience when he comes into Lancashire than he is in Yorkshire—has spoken, I may say, uttering the feeling of the whole meeting, for a very much shorter time than we had a right to expect. I shall trust, therefore, to those who come after me to say a good deal which I shall not take up your time in attempting to say to-night. During the last memorable session of Parliament you will probably recollect that it was a very common thing in the mouths of the opponents of the Government bill to say that the working men—the aggrieved party—felt no grievance; for they scarcely expressed any opinion on the bill—in its favour, or, indeed, any opinion at all on the question of their own admission to the franchise. I was repeatedly charged with being in the position of a leader in a case, and it was said that, after all, I had no clients and no following. There was a general taunt uttered that we were very much exaggerating the case of the working men, and that the condition of that large class was so comfortable and so prosperous that they were perfectly content with the Government as it is carried on by a Parliament so inadequately representing the whole nation. I suspect that the argument, so far as it was uttered, and had any force, has now been fully and satisfactorily answered. But these gentlemen have turned right round, and have now another thing to say about our meetings. They say that the middle class stands entirely aloof, that nobody really cares for reform but the working men, and that no great question can be carried, or sensibly affected, in this country by the opinions and action of working men alone. They point to the great meetings that have been held, and after dividing the notorious and proved magnitude of the meetings by four or six, they then conclude that there were a few thousands of working men present; but members of Parliament, manufacturers, merchants, and what they call the respectable and influential classes were found to be entirely absent. But they forget that these meetings at which they say working men only attended were meetings called expressly by working men and for working men. But if they want to know, or wanted to know, how far the main objects of those meetings received sympathy from a more powerful class, they might have come to those meetings to have learned. In Birmingham, as you know, the Mayor was in the procession, and the chief constable of the town took charge of all the arrangements of it; and in the great Town-hall of that city, the Mayor took the chair at the evening meeting, and I venture to say that it would be impossible in any town in this kingdom to assemble upon the platform a greater amount of what these gentlemen call respectability, wealth, and station in the town than were assembled there and then. If they had come to this hall on the evening of the great meeting in Manchester, and if they had gone to the Town-hall of Leeds, or

to the City-hall of Glasgow, they would have found that after the scores of thousands that had attended the great open-air meeting in the daytime there was a meeting most important, most influential, omnipotent indeed, within that town in which it was held. In the town of Leeds, I was told nearly 1,000 persons paid 5s. each to attend the meeting in the Town-hall, and I think that is some sign of the class of persons who attended. But if there was any question on this matter, I would ask those gentlemen to come on this platform to-night. Here is the largest and finest hall in Britain, the largest and finest hall in Europe, I believe the largest and finest hall in the world, and yet this hall is crowded with persons to whom our opponents, I think generally, unless they were very fastidious, would admit the term respectable and influential. I doubt if there has ever been held in this kingdom, within our time, a political banquet more numerous, more influential, more unanimous, more grand in every respect, than that which is held here to-night. Just now, it is the fashion to flatter and to court the middle class. The middle class are told that since the Reform Bill of 1832 political power has been in their hands; before 1832 it was with the lords and great landowners, but since 1832 it has been in the hands of the middle class, and now the middle class are asked whether they are willing to surrender that power into the hands of a more numerous, and, as these persons assert, a dangerous class, who would swamp, not the highest class of lords and great landowners, highest in social position, but would swamp also the great middle class with whom power is now said to rest. And they try to teach the middle class that there is an essentially different interest between them and the great body of the people who are not yet admitted into that class. They say the one class is in power, and the other class is outside, and out of power, and they warn the middle class against admitting the outsiders into partnership with them, for fear that they should dethrone the middle class and set up an unintelligent, unreasoning, and selfish power of their own. That is the sort of argument which is used to the middle class to induce them to take no part in any measure that shall admit the working class to a participation in political power. I should be ashamed to stand on any platform and to employ such an argument as this. Is there to be found in the writings or the speaking of any public man connected with the Liberal or the Reform party so dangerous and so outrageous a policy as that which these men pursue? When separating the great body of the people into the middle and the working class, they set class against class, and ask you to join with the past and present monopolists of power in the miserable and perilous determination to exclude for ever the great body of your countrymen from the common rights of the glorious English constitution. There is no greater fallacy than that—that the middle classes are in possession of power. The real state of the case, if it were put in simple language, would be this—that the working men are almost universally excluded, roughly and insolently, from political power, and that the middle class, whilst they have the semblance of it, are defrauded of the reality. The difference and the resemblance is this, that the working men come to the hustings at an election, and when the returning-officer asks for the show of hands every man can hold up his hand although his

name is not upon the register of voters; every working man can vote at that show of hands, but the show of hands is of no avail. The middle class have votes, but those votes are rendered harmless and nugatory by the unfair distribution of them, and there is placed in the voter's hand a weapon which has neither temper nor edge by which he can neither fight for further freedom, nor defend that which his ancestors have gained. On a recent occasion, perhaps it was when I last stood on this platform, I stated certain facts which have not, from that day to this, been contradicted—I stated that out of every 100 men throughout the United Kingdom, grown-up men, liable to taxes, expected to perform all the duties of life, responsible to the laws, 84 were excluded from the franchise, and that 16 only were included. I want to ask whether the 16 out of the 100 may be said to include all the middle class? But there is another fact, if possible more astonishing still, and that is that three men out of every 100 throughout the United Kingdom do apparently by their votes return an actual majority of the present House of Commons. But if a majority of the House of Commons be returned by a number so small as three out of every 100 of the men of the United Kingdom, and if the other House of Parliament asks for no votes at all, I ask you whether it is not a fact of the most transparent character that power, legislative and governing, in this country does not rest with the middle classes? What Mr. Forster says is quite true. You may have suffrage—this or that, but you may have distribution of power so and such that even your present representation, bad as it is, may be made something even worse. Take the case of your boroughs, in which alone may be said to rest everything that exists in the United Kingdom of a free election. Divide the boroughs, 254 in number, into two classes, those under 20,000 inhabitants and those over that number. Under 20,000 there are 145 boroughs; over it 109. But the boroughs under 20,000 return 215 members, against 181 that are returned by the boroughs over 20,000. But that gives only a very misty idea of the state of the case. Those boroughs over 20,000 inhabitants, having 39 members fewer than the the boroughs under 20,000, still are in this position—their members represent six times as many electors, seven times as much population, and fourteen times as much payment of income-tax as the larger number of members represent. It is clear beyond all cavil—for figures, after all, are difficult things to meet and controvert if they are correct—that your representative system, even in the boroughs where alone it exists in any life at all—is a representative system almost wholly delusive, and defrauds the middle classes of the power which the act of 1832 professed to give them. And your county representation is almost too sad a subject to dwell upon. Every man who occupies a house or land of an annual value less than £50 is excluded; the number of freeholders in the main diminishes, and really there remains scarcely anything of independent power and freedom of election within the majority of the counties of the United Kingdom. So, then, I come to this conclusion, that the working classes are excluded and insulted, and that the middle classes are defrauded; and I presume that those who really do wield the power despise the middle classes for their silence under this system. When I look at the great middle class of this country, and see all that it has

done, and see the political position in which it has been to some extent content to rest, I cannot help saying that it reminds me very much of the language which the ancient Hebrew patriarch addressed to one of his sons. He said : "Issachar is a strong ass, couching down between two burdens." On the one side there is the burden of seven and a half millions per annum, raised by way of tax, to keep from starvation more than one million two hundred thousand paupers within the United Kingdom—and on the other hand, and higher up in the scale, there is mismanagement the most gross, there is extravagance the most reckless, and there is waste the most appalling and disgraceful which has ever been seen in the government of any country. And this is the grand result of a system which systematically shuts out the millions, and which cajoles the middle classes by the hocus pocus of a Parliamentary Government. Sir, I am delighted beyond measure, after many years of discussion, of contemplation of labour—in connection with this great question—I say I am delighted to believe that the great body of the people, call them middle class or call them working class, are resolved that this state of things shal exist no longer. During the last session of Parliament there has been made by an honest Government an honest attempt to tinker the existing system. For, after all, the bill of the last session, honest and well intended and valuable as it was, was still but a tinkering of a very bad system. But the Tory party refused even to have it tinkered. They remind me very much of a wealthy but a most penurious old gentleman, who lived some years ago in my neighbourhood, and who objected, amongst other expenses, very much to a tailor's bill, and he said that he had found out that a hole would last longer than a patch. I am not sure that that is not the case with Lord Derby and his friends ; for it was one of their great arguments that if the bill of the Government passed it would inevitably follow that something more would almost immediately be demanded. They were so anxious that things should remain as they are that they refused to admit 200,000 more of the middle class by the lowering of the county franchise, and they refused with equal, perhaps with greater pertinacity, to admit 200,000, but, as I believe, not much more than 100,000 working men, to electoral rights. They would not suppress, nor allow the suppression of one single rotten borough, and in fact there was no abuse, however foul, however intolerable, however putrid, to which they would allow the legislative reforming knife to be applied ; and they determined to keep everything just as it is. And now these gentlemen, that we were obliged, to our great misfortune, to contend with so much last session, are in office. They call themselves Her Majesty's servants ; but they have not yet dared to proclaim that they are the accepted servants of the people. Some of their papers, and some papers which are not theirs, give us to understand,—for the papers are often understanding a great many things of which they know nothing,—that the Cabinet meetings held during the last fortnight have landed us in this strange position—that the men who were against all reform six months ago, are now warmly engaged in concocting a measure which shall be satisfactory to the great body of the Reformers of this country. My opinion is this : First of all, that the papers know nothing about it; secondly, that the

Government, we are obliged to call them a Government, has not made up its mind at all whether it will bring in a Reform Bill or not. In point of fact, Lord Derby is waiting to see what the weather will be. And I suppose they will postpone their decision perhaps for some few weeks to come. Who knows but that they will wait till this day fortnight—or yesterday fortnight? Yesterday fortnight, on Monday, the 3rd of December, it is said that, following the example of Birmingham, and the West Riding, and Glasgow, and Manchester, and Edinburgh, the men concerned in the trades in London will make what they call a demonstration, that is, that on behalf of the question of reform they will assemble and will peacefully walk through some of the main streets of the West End of London, for the purpose of showing that they take an interest in this great question. I know nothing of the arrangements, except what I see in the papers; but it is said that more than 200,000 men have arranged to walk in that procession. I hear on no mean authority that certain persons at the West End are getting up a little alarm at what may happen on the 3rd of December. What will happen we all know. If the police do not interfere to break the peace, the peace will not be broken. And, probably, what happened on the last occasion may be of some use in teaching the Home Secretary his duty on this occasion. There are persons, doubtless, so credulous and so willing to wish well of everybody as to imagine that Lord Derby's Government will bring in a satisfactory Reform Bill. They say that Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington carried Catholic Emancipation; that Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington repealed the Corn Law; and why should not Lord Derby pass a Reform Bill? Why, Lord Derby is neither the Duke of Wellington nor Sir Robert Peel. He deserted both those eminent men in 1846, rather than unite with them to repeal the corn law; and he has never shown, from that hour to this, one atom of statesmanship, or one spark of patriotism, that would lead us to expect that, on this occasion, he would turn round and, neglecting his party, do something for his country. It is all very well to say that if the Government bring in a very good bill, we who want a very good bill will support it. But it is no use dealing in phraseology and platitudes of that sort. Look at the Cabinet of Lord Derby; look what the members of it said and did during late years, and during the late parliamentary session. Lord Derby has told us that it was his mission to stem democracy; his friends in the House of Commons declared last session that the passing of that bill of the Government would be to hand over the country to the democracy of the working classes. Mr. Disraeli, in his speeches, was ingenious beyond his fellows, as indeed he generally is, for if he had not been he would not have been in the position in which we find him. But Mr. Disraeli was anxious to cut off all free election in counties. He is of opinion, so far as I gather from his speeches, that the more entirely the county representation can be made conterminous with the great estates of the peers and the great landowners, the more entirely it will be after his own fashion and his own wishes. There is no more perilous idea can be entertained by any statesman; if you once get the nominees of the great landowners and the lords on the one side of the House, and the repre-

sentatives of everybody else on the other side of the House, the beginning of the end will have come. And whilst Mr. Disraeli is tickling the ears and the fancy of the country gentlemen behind him, he is propounding a plan which, if it were carried into effect, would end in the utter extinction of the political power of the country gentlemen and the peerage of England. Mr. Disraeli and Lord Stanley were the men in the last Derby Government who proposed to disfranchise 70,000 county voters whose property was within the limits of the boroughs, and I cannot believe that men who made such a proposition seven or eight years ago can produce a good honest Reform Bill now. Lord Stanley made a speech during the discussions on the late bill which his party and their press said was unanswerable. It was a speech leading to this conclusion, that he would give no votes to any of the working class until he saw, by the distribution of seats, that those votes could be made of no use to them. And Lord Stanley lent himself to an unhappy trick, intended, as it appeared to us, to take the Government and the House by surprise, and by which, by gaining a sudden and accidental division, he might have destroyed both the bill and the Government. Lord Cranbourne is a member of this Cabinet,—Lord Robert Cecil that was a short time ago,—Lord Cranbourne quarrelled violently with Mr. Gladstone because Mr. Gladstone said the working men were of our own flesh and blood. He treated that observation very much in the same way that the Carolinian planter and slaveholder in the Senate of the United States would have replied to my friend Mr. Sumner if he had said the black and white were equal in the eye of God, and of one flesh and blood. General Peel is a member of this Government, and he protested violently against any reduction of the franchise, as indeed did Sir Stafford Northcote, who is, I think, now the President of the Board of Trade. I want to ask you whether from these men you are to expect, you are to wait for, with anxious and hopeful looking forward, any Reform Bill? And, after all these speeches had been made, Lord Derby did his utmost to prevail upon Mr. Lowe to become a member of his Cabinet. If, after all this, they were to attempt to manufacture and introduce a Reform Bill, they would cover themselves and their party with humiliation and with certain failure. I know that in this country politicians change sides; office has a wonderful effect upon men. I suppose that there are men here such as were described by our witty friend, Mr. Hosea Biglow, in painting the character of some politicians in America. He said of them as we perhaps may say of Lord Derby and his party,

> "A merciful Providence fashioned them hollow,
> On purpose that they might their principles swallow."

But, notwithstanding that provision, that merciful provision, for statesmen, I confess that I do not believe that the Government have determined to bring in a Reform Bill, or that they can by any possibility bring in a bill which the Reformers of this country can accept. They have done everything during the past session by fraudulent statements—by insults to the people —by the most evident baseness of party action—to destroy the moderate and honest attempt of Lord Russell to improve the representation. And I do not believe that in one short year they can turn round; and, capacious

as may be the internal cavity of the Tory Government, I think they cannot in one short year swallow all their Conservative principles. If a man were to tell me that he had a broth composed of half-a-dozen most poisonous ingredients, and that he could make of it a most wholesome dish, I think I should not believe him. And if he tells me that Derby, and Disraeli, and Stanley, and Cranbourne, and General Peel, and the rest of them, after the speeches to which I listened six months ago, are about to produce a wholesome, and salutary, and liberal Reform Bill, I must ask him not to impose for a moment on my understanding. The enemies of the bill of 1866 cannot become the honest friends of reform in 1867—and the conspirators of the session which has just expired cannot become honourable statesmen in the session which is about to commence. My opinion may be no better than that of any other man. This, however, may be good advice—that all reformers should be on the watch, for there are enemies enough to our cause, and false friends enough to convince us that it is by no means out of danger. But the next bill—what must it be? One thing I think we have a right to insist upon, that the next bill which is introduced by a Liberal and Reform Government shall be in its suffrage based upon the ancient borough franchise of the country. Household or rating suffrage has existed for centuries in our parishes. It has existed for many years in our municipal corporations. It has never been found either in parish or corporation to be destructive of the interests of the people of those circumscribed districts of the country. I say, therefore, that we ought to stand by the ancient Constitution of England. I believe Lord Russell, speaking of him in his private capacity, would be in favour of extending the borough franchise, at least to the limits of the municipal franchise. There is reason to believe that Mr. Gladstone himself would approve of such a measure. We know that the late Attorney-General, one of the most eminent lawyers and one of the most accomplished members of the House of Commons, publicly and openly expressed himself in favour of that change. I believe the middle class, as a rule, the Liberal portion of the middle class, would have no objection to see the franchise extended to all householders in boroughs. I believe if it were so extended we should arrive at a point at which, so long at any rate as any of us are permitted to meddle with the politics of our country, no further change would be demanded. I therefore am entirely in favour of it, because I believe it to be wise in itself, and because it is the ancient borough franchise of this kingdom. I am in favour of the constitution. I would stand by it; wherever it afforded support for freedom I would march in its track. That track is so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. I would be guided by its lights. They have been kept burning by great men among our forefathers for many generations. Our only safety in this warfare is in adhering to the ancient and noble constitution of our country. And when we have restored it to its ancient strength, and invited the great body of the people to take part in political power, then the House of Commons will be the servant of the nation and not its master, and it will do the bidding, not of a small, a limited, often an ignorant, necessarily a selfish class, but the bidding of a great and noble people.

SPEECH IN LONDON.

On the 4th December, the day following the great Trades' Demonstration in London in favour of Parliamentary Reform, Mr. Bright addressed a crowded and most enthusiastic audience in St. James's Hall. He said:—

It is about eight years since, in a speech which I delivered on the question of Parliamentary Reform, that I took the opportunity of giving what I thought was somewhat wholesome counsel to the unenfranchised working men of this country. I told them that the monopolists of political power in this country would not willingly surrender that power or any portion of it; and further, that no class that was excluded could rely upon the generosity of any other class for that justice which it demanded, and that, therefore, although large numbers of the middle class were then, and are now, in favour of the enfranchisement of a large number of the working class, yet that they would not make that great effort which is necessary to wring political power from those who now hold it and to extend it to those who are now and were then excluded from it. I said that if the working men wished for political power they had only to ask for it in a manner to show the universality of their desire and the union and the power which they were able to bring to bear upon it; and I recollect particularly making a suggestion that involved me in a good deal of unfriendly criticism, namely, that I thought the time had come, or would soon come, when it would be the duty of the working class to make use of that great organisation of theirs which extends over the whole country—the organisation of trades and friendly societies for the purpose of bringing to bear upon the Government the entire power of their just demand. I said, further, that I believed one year only of the united action of the working class through this existing organisation would wholly change the aspect of the question of Reform. Now it appears that the wholesome counsel which I gave eight years ago has become the counsel of all those who are in favour of the enfranchisement of the working man, and that counsel has been adopted recently to a large extent, and every man in the kingdom feels that the aspect of the question has been wholly changed. But, as has been already said to-night, it is very difficult to please those by whom we are opposed; and, as was said eight years ago, so it is said now, that it is very undesirable that associations like these, that were not formed for political purposes, should be worked for political ends. That is a matter of which the members of these societies must be held to be the best judges. We have known other societies that did not profess to be political, which have entered largely into political matters. I

know that some years ago nearly all the agricultural societies of the country were converted into political societies, for the purpose of sustaining an Act of Parliament which denied an honest and fair supply of food to the people of this country; and even now, when the agricultural societies and farmers' clubs meet, we hear that sort of curious and confused political discussion which takes place when the country gentlemen and the county members make speeches to their tenantry and county supporters. But these critics of ours say that this measure—the combination of the trades' unions for political purposes—is one that excites their fears, and is of a very formidable nature. It was precisely because it would be of a formidable nature that I first recommended it. The fact is, that the millions can scarcely move, but that the few who are timid and in some degree ungenerous in this matter, feel themselves alarmed; but you cannot help being numerous. If you had had better government during the last 100 years—if the land had been more in the hands of the people and less in the hands of a small class—if you had had fewer wars, lighter taxes, better instruction, and a freer trade, one-half of those in this country who are now called the working class would have been, in comfort and position, equal to those whom we call the middle class. But this is your great difficulty now, and it is the great difficulty of our opponents—you are too numerous, they think, to be let in with safety, and they are finding out that you are too numerous to be kept out without danger. But if these associations and the combinations of these societies are formidable, who have made them formidable? These societies took no part in political movement until they were challenged to it by the speeches, the resolutions, the divisions, and the acts of a great party in the Parliament of the kingdom. Did they fail to have fact and argument in favour of the change proposed last session? No; but fact and argument had no effect upon whatever there is of reasoning power in the ranks of the Tory party. Did they think that the working men of this country—those who built this great city—those who covered this country with great cities—those who have cultivated every acre of its area—who have made this country a name of power through all time and throughout the whole world—did they for one moment imagine that you would lie down and submit, without raising your voice against them, to the scandalous and unjust imputations that were heaped upon you? Did they think that you would be silent for ever, and patient for ever, under a perpetual exclusion from the benefits of the constitution of your country? If they are dissatisfied with this movement, what would they have? Would they wish that, as men did fifty or sixty years ago, instead of making open demonstration of your opinions, you should conspire with the view of changing the political constitution of your country? Would they like that you should meet in secret societies, that you should administer to each other illegal oaths, that you should undertake the task of midnight drilling, that you should purchase throughout London and the provinces a supply of arms, that you should in this frightful and terrible manner endeavour to menace the Government, and to wring from them a concession of your rights? But surely one of two modes must be taken. If there be a deep and wide-spread sentiment of injustice no longer tolerable, then, judging from all past history of all people, one of two modes will be

taken, either that mode so sad and so odious of secret conspiracy, or that mode so grand and so noble which you have adopted. You have at this moment across the Channel, if the reports which the Government sanction are true, an exhibition of a plan which I deplore and condemn. You have there secret societies, and oaths, and drilling, and arms, and menaces of violence and insurrection. Is there any man in England who would like to see the working men of Great Britain driven to any such course in defence or in maintenance of their rights? Well, I hold, then, that all men in this country, whatever be their abstract opinions on this question of a wide extension of the suffrage, should really rejoice at the noble exhibition, the orderly and grand exhibition of opinion which has been made by the working men of England and Scotland during the past three months. I said that if there be a grievance—a deep-seated sentiment that there is a grievance—there must necessarily be a voice to express and to proclaim it. What is the grievance of which you complain? You are the citizens, the native inhabitants of a country which is called constitutional; and what is meant by that is that your Government is not the despotic Government of a monarch, or the oligarchical Government of an oligarchy; but that it is a Government, a large and essential portion of which is conducted by honestly elected representatives of the people; and the grievance is this: that this constitution, so noble in its outline and so noble in its purpose, is defaced and deformed, and that when you look at it it seems in this respect absolutely worse than any other representative constitution existing in the world. For I believe there is no representation whatsoever at this moment in America or in Europe that is so entirely deformed from its natural, just, and beautiful proportions, as is the representative system of this country. What can be more clear than this—that the aristocracy of land and of wealth usurp the power in both Houses of Parliament? The Lords represent themselves, and generally the great landowners, with great fidelity. But, at the same time, we must admit and deplore that at least one-half of the House of Commons is in fast alliance with the majority in the House of Lords. Now, I have said before—I repeat it again—that there is no security whatsoever for liberty under any Government unless there be an essential power in a fair representation of the nation. An illustrious man, the founder of the great province, and now the great State of Pennsylvania—William Penn—in the preface to his constitution for that province—a constitution of the widest and most generous freedom—uses these words:—"Any Government is free to the people under it, whatever be the frame where the laws rule, and the people are a party to the laws; and more than this is tyranny, oligarchy, or confusion." Now, let us ask ourselves, can it be fairly said, can it be said without the most direct falsehood, that the people of this country, through the House of Commons, are really a party to the laws that are made? It is not at all disputed that only sixteen out of every one hundred men are now on the electoral rolls, and are able, all other circumstances favouring, to give their vote at a general election, and it is not disputed that half the House of Commons—that an absolute majority of that House—is elected by a number of electors not exceeding altogether three men out of every hundred men in the United Kingdom.

I have taken the trouble to make a little calculation from the facts contained in a very useful book published by a very old friend of mine, Mr. Acland, called the "Imperial Poll-Book," from which a great amount of valuable information may be had upon this question. I have taken out the number of votes given at the last contested election that has been held for every borough and county in the United Kingdom since the passing of the Reform Bill, and I find that there being, so far as I know, at least one contest in every place since that time, the whole number of votes given at the contest in every borough and county is short of the number of 900,000, which is about one in eight of the men in the country; and if you deduct from that number the double votes, that is the men who vote for more than one county, or who vote for a county and a borough, in all probability there would not be registered more than 800,000 votes at a general election in the United Kingdom where there was a contest in every county and in every borough. But I take the election of 1859, which is the last the particulars of which are given in the "Imperial Poll-Book," and I find there that the whole number of votes registered, so far as I could make them out, at the general election of 1859, was under 370,000. Now, deduct the double votes from this, and probably there would not be at that general election, or at the general election of last year, more than 300,000 or 320,000 men who recorded their votes? Some other allowances must be made. There are boroughs, and there may be counties, in which the opinion falls so much on one side that there could be no chance of a contest. For example, in the borough which I am permitted to represent there would be no contest, and therefore that borough would not supply any figures to those figures which I am quoting. But there are many boroughs, as we all know, in which there is no contest; in some boroughs there is no contest because there is no freedom of election. And there are many counties in which there is no contest because there is no freedom of election in those counties. But I quote these numbers to show to you that when the Queen orders through her Ministers what is generally called an appeal to the country, it is at the very utmost an appeal to 800,000 electors, and in all probability the appeal is answered by registered voters numbering from 300,000 to 400,000. Well, after this, then, I undertake to say that the people are not, in the sense of our constitution, a party to the laws, and that the Government of the United Kingdom, in the sense indicated in the quotation that I have made from William Penn's preface to his constitution, is not free to this people. And let me tell you what doubtless many men have not thought of, that there is no form of government much worse than the Government of a sham representation. A Parliament like our Parliament has members enough, and just enough of the semblance of representation, to make it safe for it to do almost anything it likes against the true interests of the nation. There is nothing so safe as a Parliament like this for the commission of what is evil. There is not representation enough to make it truly responsible to the intelligence, and the virtue, and the opinions of the nation. Take a case which is in the recollection of all of us. Is there any man in the world who believes for a moment that any monarch that ever sat on the English throne would have dared in 1815 to have passed

the corn law—to have brought into action in this city of London, horse, foot, and artillery—to have surrounded his own palace—and to have beaten off the people who were protesting against the enactment of that law? But the Parliament of England did that, and a Parliament of landowners, for the express and only purpose of increasing their own rents by the sacrifice of the comfort, the plenty, the health, and the life of the great body of the people. But to come only to the last session of Parliament. We will not go back to the time before the Reform Act. We will only go to the last session of Parliament. Look at their responsibility then, and their sense of responsibility. Look at the moderation of that bill which was brought in by the late Government. Was it possible to have proposed a more moderate measure than that of the late Government? Well, but what happened? A Parliament of landowners and of rich men, who have wholly despised that great national opinion which has been exhibited during the last three or four months, resisted that measure with a pertinacity never exceeded, and with an amount of intrigue, and I say of unfairness to the Government, which they durst not for one single night have attempted if they had felt any real responsibility to the people of this country. And now they resist up to this moment, and for aught I know may resist when they meet at the beginning of February next, and they may possibly resist until the discontent which is now so general shall become universal, and that which is now only a great exhibition of opinion may become necessarily and inevitably a great and menacing exhibition of force. And these opponents of ours, many of them in Parliament openly, and many of them secretly in the press, have charged us with being the promoters of a dangerous excitement. They say we are the source of the danger which threatens; and they have absolutely the effrontery to charge me with being the friend of public disorder. I am one of the people. Surely, if there be one thing in a free country more clear than another, it is that any one of the people may speak openly to the people. If I speak to the people of their rights, and indicate to them the way to secure them—if I speak to the monopolists of power of their danger—am I not a wise counsellor—both to the people and to their rulers? Suppose I stood at the foot of Vesuvius or Etna, and I saw a hamlet, or a homestead standing upon its slope, and I said to the dwellers in that hamlet, or in that homestead, You see that vapour which ascends from the summit of the mountain. That vapour may become a dense, black smoke that will obscure the sky. You see that trickling of lava from the crevices or fissures in the side of the mountain. That trickling of lava may become a river of fire. You hear that muttering in the bowels of the mountain. That muttering may become a bellowing thunder, the voice of a violent convulsion that may shake half a continent. You know that at your feet is the grave of great cities for which there is no resurrection, as history tells us dynasties and aristocracies have passed away and their name has been known no more for ever. If I say this to the dwellers upon the slope of the mountain, and if there comes hereafter a catastrophe which makes the world to shudder, am I responsible for that catastrophe? I did not build the mountain, or fill it with explosive materials. I merely warned the men that were in danger. So, now, it is not I who am stimulating men to the violent pursuit of their

acknowledged constitutional rights. We are merely about our lawful business—and you are the citizens of a country that calls itself free, yet you are citizens to whom is denied the greatest and the first blessing of the constitution under which you live. If the truth must be told, the Tory party is the turbulent party of this nation. I left the last session of Parliament just about the time when the present Ministers, successful in their intrigues, acceded to office—I left the Parliament with a feeling of sadness, of disgust, and of apprehension. I said to myself, I may as well judge of the future by the past. The Parliament of England will not do justice to the people until there happens something that will suddenly open their eyes. I remembered what took place in the year 1829 when the Duke of Wellington said: Either give political power and representation through Catholic members to the Catholics of the United Kingdom, or encounter the peril and loss of civil war in Ireland. Up to that moment, Parliament had refused to do it. Then Parliament consented and the thing was done. In 1832 you were within twenty-four hours of revolution in this country. This great class which sits omnipotent in one House, and hardly less so in the other, might then, and probably would have been extinguished, and what there would have been left except the people it is difficult to imagine. In 1846, although every intelligent man in every country in the world admitted the justice and force of our arguments against the corn law, still it required the occurrence of a crushing and desolating famine in Ireland—a famine which destroyed as many lives in that country as would have been destroyed by a great war, and which drove into exile as many of the people of that island as would have been driven into exile by the most cruel and relentless conquest—it required all that before the Parliament of England, the men amongst whom I sit, and whose faces are as familiar to me as those of any person whom I know in life—I say that it required all that before Parliament would consent to give up that intolerable wrong of taxing the bread of an industrious people. Now, suppose that the bill which was brought into the House last session as a franchise bill only—which was done, as was admitted by Lord Russell, in adoption of advice which I had publicly given to the Government, and which advice I believe was eminently sound, and ought to be followed whenever this question is dealt with again by a Liberal and honest Government—I say, suppose that that bill, instead of being met with every kind of unfair and ungenerous opposition, had been wisely accepted by the House of Commons and become law, what would have been the state of the country during the present autumn and winter. It would have been one of rejoicing and congratulation everywhere. Not because the bill included everybody and satisfied everybody, but all working men would have felt that the barrier created at the Reform Bill, if not absolutely broken down, was at least so much lowered that the exclusion was much less general and less offensive. You would have had this result, that we, the people in these islands, would have been no longer two nations. We should have felt more—that henceforth we are one people. Every element of strength in the country would have been immeasurably strengthened, and there would have been given even to the humblest of the unenfranchised a feeling of hope which would

have led him to believe in, and to strive after, something higher and better than that to which he had hitherto been able to attain. Now, who prevented this? Surely we did not prevent it. We who thought we were speaking for the general good of the people, we accepted the measure with an honourable sincerity and fidelity. We said that it is good to the point to which it steps forward. It is perfectly honest; it is no trick or subterfuge. It will give satisfaction to some hundreds of thousands, and it will give that which is as great a boon—it will give hope to millions whom it does not include—and therefore, in perfect honourableness, we accepted that measure; and who opposed it? None other could effectually oppose it than Lord Derby and the party of which he is the acknowledged and trusted leader. They and he opposed and rejected that bill, and they and he are responsible for what has been done since in the country as a necessary and inevitable consequence of that rejection. Lord Derby now stands nearest to the throne, and I venture to say that he is now not a strength but a weakness to that throne. By his conduct—and by the conduct of his party, which he adopts—he thwarted at once the benevolent intentions of the Crown and just expectations of the people. I confess that I am astonished at the conduct of the Tory party in this matter. When the bill was introduced into the House of Commons, it appeared to me to be the very last that any statesmen with a spark of sense or honesty could offer any opposition to, and I did not believe that on the other side of the House there was, I will say, if you like, bitter partisanship or stupidity enough to induce them to fight a combined battle with all who would join them for the purpose of rejecting that bill. Now, one would suppose that the present Government had troubles enough on hand in what is called the sister country without urging the people to excitement here. Ireland, as I have described it before Irishmen, is the favoured field on which all the policy of the Tory party has been exhibited, displayed, and tried. Well, in Ireland the Habeas Corpus Act is suspended. Individual liberty, except by consent of the Executive, is abolished; troops are pouring into the country; ironclads, it is said, are ordered to the coast to meet some, I hope and believe, imaginary foe—and the country gentlemen and their families are reported to be fleeing from their ancestral homes to find refuge in garrison towns; and all this is the magnificent result of the policy of the party of which Lord Derby is the head and hope. And now even, up to this very last session of Parliament, that party had no remedy for this state of things but that ancient, and rude, and savage remedy, the remedy of military force. But with all this in Ireland, as I hope and believe, greatly exaggerated by some public writers, yet still with enough to cause pain and anxiety, was that a judicious course for the present party in power to create a great excitement in Great Britain? I say that Lord Derby, as the representative of his party in Parliament, is himself the fomenter of discord, and that his party, and not our party, is at this moment the turbulent element in English political society. And let me tell this party—I tell them nothing from this platform that I have not told them upon the floor of the House of Commons—let me tell them that this question will not sleep. Some months ago there was a remarkable convention held in Switzerland composed of men of eminence

and character, by which an address or memorial was prepared and forwarded to the Government of the United States, congratulating them upon the close of their gigantic struggle, and upon the establishment of universal freedom throughout the wide bounds of the republic. There was a passage in that memorial, an expression of true philosophy and true statesmanship, to this effect: "Unfinished questions have no pity for the repose of nations." That referred to the great question of negro slavery; but it is just as true when it is applied to the question before us, where from five to six millions of grown men in this United Kingdom, under a constitutional Government and with a representative system, are shut out directly and purposely from that constitution and representation. This great question which we are debating to-night is an unfinished question, and, as the Swiss express it, it will have no pity on the repose of this nation until it is a finished question. I observed to-day, in a newspaper considered by some to be of great authority, that the working men are supposed by what are called our betters—for that paper only writes for our betters—they are supposed to have now done enough, and they are exhorted—by the very hand, probably, which during the whole of the last session of Parliament was doing all it could against them—to stand still and wait for the action of Parliament. Well, but it is the same Parliament, it is the same House of Commons which I left with sadness and apprehension in July last. There are in it yet the men who, on our side of the House, betrayed the cause which they were supposed to sit there to defend, and the only change that we know of is, that the men who threw out with all terms of ignominy the bill which we wished to pass last session, are now and will be in February next—if they do not break in pieces before—they will be then on the Treasury bench, and will take that leading and authoritative position in the House which belongs to the Ministers of the Crown. Now, I differ from this writer altogether; I would not put any confidence in the course to be taken by this House of Commons if I were a man unfranchised and asking for a vote. I should like them to tell me that they had wholly repented of the cheers with which they met all those vile and violent imputations upon your character. My opinion is this: that your duty, your obvious duty—a duty from which you cannot escape—is to go on as you have begun, to perfect in every part of the country your organisation in favour of your enfranchisement. It is to bring every society with which you are connected, to give itself for a time—it will only be a short time—to the working out of your political redemption. I should advise you, whether you are supporters of the Reform League in London, or are connected in any way with the Reform Union of Manchester or any similar association, to establish a system of small, but weekly or monthly contributions. Do not allow my friend Mr. Beales—or my ancient friend and political brother, Mr. George Wilson, of Manchester—do not allow them to want the means to carry on and direct the great societies of which they are chiefs. And let me beg of you, more than all else, to have no jealousies amongst each other. Give our chairman his due; give Mr. Beales and the council their due; give every man who, with a single eye to this great question, is working zealously in your cause, his due, and help in every way you can every honest endeavour to bring this great national question to such a solid and final issue,

that it shall no longer disturb the repose of this nation. And lastly, I beg of you to rise to something like a just contemplation of what the great issue is for which you are contending. It is to make you citizens of one of the noblest nations on the face of the earth, of a nation which has a grand history in the past, and which I trust, and partly through your help, will have a still grander history in the future. Let me beg of you, then, and it is the last word I may speak to you to-night, that in all you do you may be animated by a great and noble spirit, for you have set your hands and hearts to a great and noble work.

At a later period of the Meeting, on the motion for a vote of thanks to the Chairman, Mr. Bright took occasion to express his dissent from observations made by one of the speakers in reference to the Queen. He spoke as follows :—

I rise for one moment before the vote of thanks is put. I need hardly say that I entirely concur in it, and I hope it will receive the unanimous support of the meeting; but I rise for the purpose of making in one sentence a reference to a portion of the speech of one of the speakers, which I hope I did not fully comprehend, but, if I did, in which I am totally unable to concur. He made an allusion to the great meeting of yesterday, to the assemblage in the park and the neighbourhood of the Palace. He also made observations with regard to the Queen, which, in my opinion, no meeting of people in this country, and certainly no meeting of Reformers, ought to listen to with approbation. Let it be remembered that there has been no occasion on which any Ministry has proposed an improved representation of the people when the Queen has not given her cordial, unhesitating, and, I believe, hearty assent. Let it be remembered, if there be now at her side a Minister who is opposed to an improvement of the representation of the people, it is because, in obedience to well-known rules and constitutional practice, the decision of the House of Commons on the bill of last Session rendered it necessary for her to take the course which she then did take. But the hon. gentleman referred further to a supposed absorption of the sympathies of the Queen in grief for her late husband to the exclusion of sympathy for and with the people. I am not accustomed to stand up in defence of those who are possessors of crowns. But I could not sit here and hear that observation without a sensation of wonder and of pain. I think there has been by many persons a great injustice done to the Queen in reference to her desolate and widowed position. And I venture to say this, that a woman, be she the Queen of a great realm or the wife of one of your labouring men, who can keep alive in her heart a great sorrow for the lost object of her life and her affections, is not at all likely to be wanting in a great and generous sympathy with you.

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